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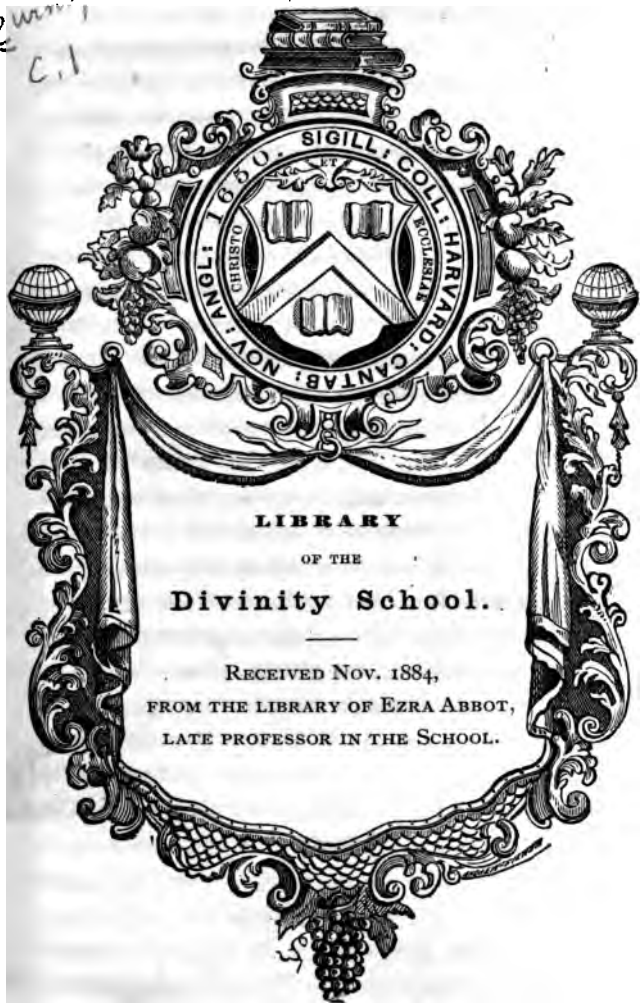

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CHRISTIANITY,

ITS ESSENCE AND EVIDENCE:

OR,

AN ANALYSIS

OF

THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTO

HISTORICAL FACTS, DOCTRINES, OPINIONS, AND PHRASEOLOGY.

BY

GEORGE W. BURNAP, D. D.

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PREFACE.

THE following work was projected and commenced more than twenty years ago. At that time, German Rationalism had just begun to agitate the minds of American theologians, and disturb the peace of our churches. The author was led to investigate the grounds of belief in the supernatural origin and superhuman authority of the Christian religion anew.

About that time, he fell in with a book of a very interesting and extraordinary character, written by the famous Jeremy Bentham, and entitled, "Not Paul, but Jesus." In this work that distinguished man attempted to show that Paul had corrupted Christianity, and that the Christianity of the Church had been anything but Christian since his time. The works of Jefferson were published almost contemporaneously, and they were found to contain nearly the same sentiments.

It began to be admitted, too, by Christian theologians, such as Stewart of Andover and Neander of Germany, that there was such an element in the New Testament as the *opinions* of the Apostles, for which Christianity ought not to be made responsible. Since that period, various hypotheses have been started, varying from the concessions made by Stewart and Neander, to the total denial and unbelief of Strauss and the Tübingen critics.

No theological scholar, if he is candid, the author believes, will hesitate to admit that the last twenty years have been a period of anxious inquiry. He cannot have failed to perceive, that most of the issues which have been raised in the Christian Church have been false and irrelevant. The controversies between Orthodoxy and Liberal Christianity have cleared these false issues away, and, freeing the question between belief and unbelief from the mists which hung over it, have brought it to be discussed on its true merits.

Increasing difficulties arose in the way of the defender of the authority of the New Testament, from the *doctrines* it was supposed to teach. Many of them, as maintained by most churches, came in direct conflict with that

sense of justice which makes an indestructible part of our nature, and those moral feelings which are the glory and crown of humanity. Advancing Science, too, began to enter her protest against certain opinions embodied in the New Testament, which the Church had received as of divine authority, and incorporated with Christian dogmas.

In this state of things, it occurred to the author that the time had come for a new analysis of the contents of the New Testament. On the old hypothesis of making it a homogeneous book, all doctrine, all equally essential, it must encounter such serious objections as to overtask the faith of an enlightened age. On this hypothesis the main objection of Gibbon never has been, and never can be, answered.

After years of study and examination, the following analysis suggested itself as satisfactory. It seemed to the author to meet and reconcile all the difficulties of the case.

Having thoroughly digested his plan, the author began to carry it out in a course of Lectures delivered in the winter of 1841–42, which were afterwards published under the title of "Lectures on the History of Christianity," and which have been before the public for thirteen

years. Those Lectures were intended merely as an introduction to the present volume; but before the author was aware, they had become a volume themselves. It was only in the last lecture that the present analysis was proposed.

Incessant professional occupation, and various other literary enterprises, have suspended the completion of the plan to the present time. It is now offered to the Christian public as the fruit of the toil and thought of thirty years.

The writer does not expect that his analysis will be satisfactory to all, and perhaps it may not commend itself fully to any mind; but he trusts that the necessity of some such classification of the contents of the New Testament will be seen and acknowledged, and that many who are embarrassed by the commonly received hypotheses may see their way clear to retain a firm faith in Christianity as a religion of supernatural origin and superhuman authority.

BALTIMORE, *May*, 1855.

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DISCOURSE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

BE IT KNOWN UNTO YOU ALL, AND TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, THAT BY THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH, WHOM YE CRUCIFIED, WHOM GOD HATH RAISED FROM THE DEAD, EVEN BY HIM DOTH THIS MAN STAND HERE BEFORE YOU ALL. THIS IS THE STONE WHICH WAS SET AT NAUGHT OF YOU BUILDERS, WHICH IS BECOME THE HEAD OF THE CORNER. NEITHER IS THERE SALVATION IN ANY OTHER, FOR THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED. — Acts iv. 10, 11, 12.

Nothing can be more certain, as an historical fact, than that Christianity has been of vast advantage to the world. It has become the basis of modern civilization; its spirit, diffused in society, has mitigated the barbarism of ancient manners, its precepts have entered into modern legislation, and rendered laws more mild, equitable, and just. It has freed the human mind from a load of debasing superstitions. It has purified religious rites from sanguinary usages and shocking immoralities.

Jesus of Nazareth was the corner-stone of Christianity. The world received its new impulse from

his personality, his history, his life, his precepts; from all, in short, which is related of him in the New Testament. It is certain, if anything can be relied on as historical fact, that he extracted all that was spiritual and universal in the religion of Moses, and separated it from the ritual of that ancient institution, connected it with a new ritual, and made it accessible to all mankind. He instituted an outward organization, which he denominated his Church, which had for its object the dissemination of his religion and its transmission to the remotest ages. The Church, which he instituted, has subsisted to the present time. It has been continually spreading wider and wider over the earth, and it has survived everything but Judaism which then existed upon the earth.

The vital principle which brought the Church into existence was *faith in Christ, as an authorized and authenticated Teacher sent by God.* It was early believed, that no one could speak as he spoke, and teach as he taught, without supernatural aid. The *wisdom* which he displayed in the enunciation and combination of the truths of religion, and in constructing his Church, so far transcending the wisdom of any one man, and indeed of all the sages and philosophers who have ever appeared upon the earth, has driven men to suppose that it had a divine, and not a merely human origin.

It has seemed, moreover, to thoughtful men, that there are strong indications, not only of *supernatural interference*, but of *providential arrangement*, in the appearance of Christianity in the world; in the succession of the religions preceding it, the Patri-

archal and Mosaic, by which a portion of the human race had become prepared to receive a spiritual and universal religion; in the contemporaneous preparation of the world to be approached by the propagators of the new faith; and in the diffusion of that culture which rendered the reception of the doctrines and institutions of Christianity a possibility.

The very structure of the Christian Church implies and supposes a supernatural origin. Its two only ordinances appeal to a superhuman authority. *Baptism*, which we have every reason to believe prevailed from the first, is a formal recognition of a supernatural mission and authority in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of the Church. *The Supper* was a commemoration of the inauguration of Christianity as a religion *specially* given by God to man, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. "This is the *new covenant* in my blood." It derived its main significance and moral power from the fact, that it supposed the subsequent resurrection of Jesus, and its celebration afterwards expressed the belief that he had gone to heaven and to God, and still watched over his Church, and was spiritually present with it.

The Church was founded on the belief in the supernatural origin of the *teaching* of Christ, and the *miraculous attestations* of it, which were supposed to seal it as coming from God. If the Gospels are to be trusted as history, the impression was deep and extensive. Notwithstanding the humility of his exterior, he was followed by multitudes. To them his word was with power. *They were astonished at his doctrine.* They bore testimony, that *never man spake like this man.* Peter is related to have said, after

having been long his disciple, *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.* Those teachings were committed by the disciples, his companions, to writing, and although in their reports they may have lost something of their original force, they have made the same impression on all succeeding ages. One of the greatest minds of modern times, and indeed of all times, who has lately passed away from this earth, has left his testimony to the world on his tombstone, that the Sermon on the Mount was to him the strongest evidence, not only of the divine mission of Christ, but of the reality of religion and the immortality of the soul.

It is easy for any person to compare the words of Jesus with all other writings, and to judge by their character whether it is most reasonable to attribute them to unaided human reason, or divine inspiration. The Church, I have said, was founded on a belief in divine and miraculous interposition, authenticating Christ as a divine teacher, and Christianity as a divine institution. The book of Acts, which has every feature of an earnest and truthful account of the very commencement of the Christian Church, shows conclusively, that *its foundation was laid in the belief in the resurrection of Jesus*, and its growth was aided by the persuasion, that *miraculous powers* were still continued to the Apostles during their ministry.

The persuasion of the superhuman origin of the doctrines of Christ, and their supernatural attestation by his resurrection, was not only the foundation of the Church, but *was the source of its moral power*, by which its members were elevated so far above the level

of the world at large, both of contemporary Judaism and surrounding idolatry. The Gospel, as far as we can judge, came home to the consciences of men with irresistible power, *because it was a more perfect embodiment and expression of moral truth than had ever been presented to them before.* The essential truths of universal religion were exhibited in such a form of beauty and power, as no human wisdom or ingenuity had ever reached, and all the teachings of the wisest philosophers sink into insignificance in comparison with the teachings of Jesus, and seem like the merest babblings of childhood.

The sanction and bond of all moral and religious obligation *is the doctrine of immortality*, and its natural consequence, that there will be a future and complete retribution. Without this, religion has no vitality, and morality sinks to a mere worldly expediency, and the noblest virtues subside into a fantastic enthusiasm or a selfish caution. Human life, confined within the narrow horizon of the present world, is shorn of its glory, and becomes comparatively dishonored, mean, and valueless. Human nature loses its sacredness, and human rights are trodden under foot without scruple, without sympathy, and without remorse.

The difference is almost infinite in the self-respect that is begotten by the expectation of immortality, and the persuasion that death puts a period to both soul and body. He who expects to die the death of a brute will feel little degradation in living the life of a mere animal. *The moral and religious nature of man becomes an absurd superfluity.* The natural hope inspired by a life of integrity, of self-denial, of justice

and benevolence, becomes a mere phantom of delusion, and the fear, which oppresses a guilty conscience, of what shall be after death, becomes the weakest of superstitions. The solemnity of an oath, which is at present the safeguard of life, liberty, and property, is the idlest of mockeries. And were such to be the universal conviction, the main-spring of the order and progress of society would be broken, and society itself would collapse into a state of complete demoralization.

In the resurrection of Christ, those who believed in it as an historical fact conceived themselves to have received *strong confirmation of the natural hope of immortality.* Through the risen Saviour, they had received certain intelligence from the spiritual world, which is veiled from the eye of sense, and the members of the Christian Church which was first organized by a belief in the fact, were immediately elevated by that belief to a level of moral purity, of religious fervor, of mutual esteem and affection, of spirituality and devotedness, that the world had never seen before.

Faith in Christ, then, as an authenticated messenger from God, as the founder of a religious society, and as a risen, ever-living Saviour, was the foundation of the Christian Church. Upon the strength of this faith, his religion has spread over a large part of the globe. Thus was Christ *the corner-stone*, and in Divine Providence he has been the instrument, in the hands of God, of effecting the moral regeneration of the world.

But the reception of Jesus of Nazareth as the corner-stone, as the moral power by which the world

was to be regenerated, was not unanimous. According to the history, at the age of about thirty, he came forth into the world and *assumed the position of a supernatural mission from God; and of superhuman authority over men*, as naturally flowing from it. To that position his whole bearing and conduct were adjusted. He demanded it as a right, he required submission to it as a duty. He bore witness to it from his own consciousness. He appealed to the spotless integrity of his whole character, and defied his enemies to convict him of the slightest moral obliquity. He appealed to the testimony of John the Baptist, he appealed to his own miracles, he alleged the transcendent wisdom of his doctrine, as the accumulated proofs that he was what he claimed to be, and finally staked his claim upon the fulfilment of his prophecy of rising from the dead. By the rulers of his nation he was rejected and put to death. By those whom he called about him, and who were witnesses of his daily life, he was viewed as a teacher sent from God, and as bearing the words of eternal life. He was rejected by the rulers, as an impostor, and put to death as a seditious person and a disturber of the peace.

His disciples testified to the world that God raised him from the dead, according to his own prediction, and sent them abroad to propagate his religion over the world. They recorded his history and teaching; they left an account of their own doings as his Apostles; and their correspondence is still extant, while they were engaged in the establishment of the Christian Church. And so both the Church and their writings have come down to our day.

But there are some, as at first, who now reject Christ as the corner-stone, and deny his claims to all supernatural authority. They give a different version to the whole account of the origin of Christianity. They repudiate the supernatural element altogether. They allege that there has been somewhere a grand mistake. The rejection of the miraculous has been the sum and substance of modern unbelief. But all confess that it is *in* the New Testament. If it is an interpolation, some account must be given of the way by which it got there. And on this point there is the greatest possible variety of opinion. Time would fail us to consider the various hypotheses which have been started, all different, and most of them contradictory to each other.

By some, miracles are set aside, as *so improbable in themselves as to be incapable of proof.* They are improbable, because it is not to be supposed that a Being infinitely wise and powerful would construct the world, either of mind or matter, in such a way as to *need* alteration or amendment. They are incapable of proof, because they must rest on human testimony, and human testimony is more likely to be false than the laws of nature to be changed.

The miraculous, therefore, in Christianity, so far from lending additional support to the doctrine of immortality, is unable to bear its own weight. Those, therefore, who hold the doctrine of immortality to be naturally improbable, consider the attempt to substantiate that doctrine by miraculous evidence as an endeavor to corroborate one improbability by another. They consider the doctrines of the New Testament to be *less likely to be true* from

the miraculous element there is in it, instead of more so. All writings are rendered suspicious and unreliable by containing any recognition of the miraculous.

This objection, however confidently made, has hitherto had but little weight with thinking men. It seems idle to affirm what that omnipotent Power, who made and sustains the world, can, or cannot, do. These very unbelievers in revelation, because it contains records of the miraculous, believe the geologist when he tells them that there was a time when the race of man did not exist upon our earth. It is undeniably certain, that the first pair were created by miracle, and not according to any known law. If miracles are impossible, then we must deny that there is any such thing as the human race upon the face of the earth.

Another undertakes to tell us *how* and *when* the mistake of incorporating the miraculous with Christianity was committed. The New Testament was not written by the Apostles, or their companions, or by any original witnesses of the ministry of Jesus. The life and history of Jesus subsisted in the form of oral traditions. Jesus had been a remarkable man, and a remarkable teacher. A religious sect sprung up under his name, and was held together by his doctrines. Veneration for his character, and a love of the marvellous, interspersed the narrative of his birth, his life, his death and burial, with various miracles and prodigies, which were thought to correspond with his real greatness and his historical importance.

Another admits that the documents which compose the New Testament bear indisputable internal

evidence of being the production of the Apostolic age. Some of them were written by the Apostles themselves, the companions and contemporaries of Jesus. Yet, connected with the reports of the sublime discourses of Jesus, there are exhibitions of so much *ignorance, credulity, and superstition*, that it is rendered more probable that they were mistaken or carried away by their enthusiasm, than that the miracles they reported should have really taken place. Miracles have been attested by eyewitnesses in all ages of the world, and still wise and conscientious men do not hesitate to reject such accounts as intrinsically improbable.

Others carry the mistake still higher, and suppose it to have originated with Jesus himself. A distinguished statesman of our own country has said of him: "Elevated by the enthusiasm of a warm and pure heart, conscious of the high strains of an eloquence which had not been taught him, he might easily mistake the coruscations of his own fine genius for inspiration of a higher order. This belief, therefore, carried no more personal imputation than the belief of Socrates, that himself was under the care and admonitions of a guardian Dæmon."

But this imputation, under the color of doing honor to Christ and saving his personal character, strikes a fatal blow to all reliance on his teachings. In that case, what he has taught us on the subject of immortality, as a certainty positively known to himself, falls from that level to that of his *individual opinion, the suffrage of his judgment upon a disputed matter of great uncertainty.* And the weight of his opinion upon this subject, instead of being *greater*

than that of other men, actually falls *below* it, from the circumstance that it is the opinion or suffrage of a mind unhinged upon one point, and capable of being misled by the false judgment that he was inspired by God.

Another explanation of the origin of Christianity has been, that it was a *pious fraud* from the beginning. Jesus of Nazareth was a transcendent religious genius, and a zealous philanthropist and reformer. He saw the world sunk in barbarism and idolatry, and his own nation dwarfed and enslaved by ignorance and superstition, and knowing that his countrymen expected about that time a great national deliverer, and that there were passages in their sacred writings which they deemed prophetical, he undertook a moral and religious reformation upon the basis of those prophecies and expectations. He knowingly misrepresented the dictates of his own powerful understanding, as the immediate inspiration of God. He either pretended to work miracles, or his followers pretended that he did. He commenced a public ministry, and committed himself to the current of circumstances, to succeed or fail, as fortune might direct. He was successful in rallying around him a party, which formed the nucleus of a Church, an extensive organization which perpetuated itself, and has continued to the present day; but in doing so he became involved with the civil authorities, and lost his life.

Such are some of the hypotheses which have been resorted to in order to account for the New Testament and the Christian Church as historical phenomena, without admitting the supernatural element

which they involve. I do not pretend to have exhausted them all. It may suffice to have given those already mentioned as specimens of the whole.

Another class of unbelievers take another ground. They do not consider themselves bound to account for the New Testament or the Church at all. They bring forward certain parts of the New Testament, and certain things contained in it, as false or incredible, and on the strength of them reject the whole book as fabulous and unreliable.

An unbeliever there is, now alive, who has attempted to edify the world by detailing the process of rejection which went on in his own mind, till, in his own language, "Christ and the Devil faded out of his spiritual vision, only to leave more vividly God and Man." Such is his estimate of probabilities, that he considers an abstract *a priori* argument sufficient to refute the whole positive testimony of the New Testament. "It is," says he, "an unplausible opinion, that God would deviate from his ordinary course in order to give us anything so undesirable as an authoritative oracle would be, which would paralzye our moral powers exactly as an infallible Church does, in the very proportion to which we succeed in eliciting answers from it." This objection has certainly the merit of originality to recommend it, with this further advantage, that it gives us the means of forming a judgment of the intellectual calibre of one of the most zealous of modern assailants of the divine origin and authority of Christianity.

Another class of unbelievers tell us, that the New Testament is to be rejected as an authentic history of past transactions, because of the *discrepancies* of

the different writers, and the *variations* of the testimony of the different witnesses. One gives the genealogy of Jesus as ascending through one line of ancestry, and another through another. One tells us that Judas, the traitor, died by his own hand in one way, and another in another. One says, that a certain field was bought by the rulers of the Jews with the price of treachery, which Judas brought back, and another, that it was bought by Judas himself; and two different reasons are given why it was called "the field of blood."

One Evangelist relates, that Jesus, on a certain occasion, in going out of Jericho, met *two* blind men, who were importunate in their entreaties to him to heal them, and he did so. Another, detailing the same accompanying circumstances, says, that there was *one* blind man, and gives his name as Bartimeus. The four Gospels give four different inscriptions upon the cross of Christ. It is naturally impossible that more than one of these can be verbally correct, and perhaps not one of them.

But what follows from this? That Christ was never crucified, and that no inscription was placed upon his cross? He who should draw such a conclusion would outrage all reason and common sense. These different inscriptions only prove that the testimony is *human*, not that it is untrue. All human testimony admits of verbal and immaterial variations, without impairing its trustworthiness. It is so in matters involving life and death. So the two different genealogies of Jesus do not prove that there was no such person, or that he was not a lineal descendant of David. He might have been descended from the

royal stock by several lines, as we are all equally descended from sixteen progenitors of the fourth degree. Certain it is, that the genealogy of Christ must have been satisfactory to his contemporaries; for no one would have been listened to a moment who pretended to be the Messiah, unless he could show his descent, by the public registers, from the royal lineage of David and Solomon.

Others are scandalized by *certain opinions*, which they allege were entertained by the writers of the New Testament. It seems evident to them, that the Apostles believed in *a personal Devil*, and in the existence of *wicked spirits*, which had the power to possess and torment mankind, — to inflict upon them bodily diseases, and mental disorders; and that Jesus actually drove them out, and delivered men from their inflictions. Men entertaining such puerile superstitions are not to be trusted as witnesses of matters of fact, nor as historians of the events of their own age.

But it may be answered, that all history extending back more than three hundred years, on this principle, must be set aside as altogether uncertain, since the belief in witchcraft was *universal* before that period, and the wisest of men took part in putting their fellow-creatures to death for the crime of witchcraft. The origin of diseases was a matter of *science*, and not of religion; and a religious teacher, who should have attempted to set the world right on all matters of science collateral with religion, would have accomplished nothing, and probably have fallen a sacrifice to his philosophical doctrines quite as soon as to his religious dogmas.

The same is true of the *geological* opinions which then prevailed of the structure of the earth. It was thought to be a plain, instead of a globe, having beneath it a vast expanse, corresponding in depth and extent to the height and breadth of heaven above. To this world they seem to have supposed that all souls descended when released from the body, not excepting the soul of Christ himself. Any attempt to correct this universal opinion would have been useless, and it was better left to the progress of science and discovery.

Gibbon has made it the ground of profane scoff, and, as he supposed, a triumphant reason for the rejection of Christianity, that the Apostles seem to have expected *a personal return of Christ to the earth during their own day, or at least at no distant period.* If this be admitted, what inference can be legitimately drawn from it? Does it affect their credibility as *witnesses?* — for this is the capacity in which they stand between us and Christ. Not at all. It merely concerns *the extent of their inspiration.* There is a previous and very important question: Was it taught by Christ, or was it *a misinterpretation of his language,* which it required merely the lapse of time to correct? Is it credible that he did teach such a doctrine, at the same time that he professed to be promulgating a *universal* religion, and the call of those very disciples made a part of his arrangements for "teaching that religion to all nations"? He professed to be that personage to whom Abraham and Moses and the prophets looked forward, *as ushering in a more important period of the world's history than had ever occurred before;* when men should no longer wor-

ship God in this locality or that, but the true and spiritual worshippers should worship him acceptably *all over the earth.* It is incredible that Jesus, while utterring such predictions, and making such arrangements, could have taught that the world was soon coming to an end. The very enterprise of Christianizing the world must itself consume ages and centuries.

Others have taken offence at the *phraseology* of the New Testament, or rather at the doctrines which have been drawn from certain expressions used by Jesus and his Apostles. Jesus called himself *the Son of God.* And upon this expression, and others analogous to it, a most wonderful *mythology* has been constructed. As a son ordinarily has the same nature with his father, Jesus of Nazareth, besides his human nature, was supposed to have had a divine nature, derived immediately from the essence of God, and partaking of all his attributes. An analysis of the New Testament shows that this epithet had originally no such signification. Christ himself explained his use of it to have reference, not to his *nature*, but his *mission*, his having been "sanctified and sent into the world by God."

The same is true with the *sacrificial language* of the New Testament. At first sight it has the appearance of teaching the transfer of human guilt from one person to another, and, of course, the irrational doctrine of *suffering punishment by proxy*, and acquiring righteousness in the same way. These things being moral impossibilities, if really taught in the Scriptures, would diminish, if not destroy, their credibility as containing a revelation from God.

It is the object of the following Discourses to meet and obviate these various objections, to show, in opposition to the unbeliever, that Christianity has a solid basis of historical facts; that the history of the New Testament is an extract from the history of the world, and not an interpolation into it; that the Apostles were real men among the actors in the scenes of the past; that the variations of the Gospels are immaterial; and that, admitting almost any hypothesis of their origin, these compositions leave certain and undeniable the unique and extraordinary personality of Jesus Christ; they make certain his appearance among men, and the principal events of his life; they make certain his agency in establishing the Christian Church, in promulgating its doctrines and precepts and establishing its rites and discipline, and, moreover, his consciousness of a mission from God to take the position he assumed, and to do the work which he accomplished.

It will be the purpose of these Discourses to analyze the New Testament into its constituent elements; to show that it is not a homogeneous book, — that it contains various elements, such as HISTORY, DOCTRINES, OPINIONS, and PHRASEOLOGY.

When thus sent into the world by God, and authenticated as his Messenger, Christ taught certain doctrines, which embrace all the fundamental principles of religion, and gave them in charge to his disciples, to be perpetuated to the end of the world. But in inculcating these doctrines he necessarily used the language of the age and nation to which he belonged. He alluded to opinions which were then extant, without affirming or denying them. I

intend to show that it is highly improper and unjust to make these floating opinions constituent elements of Christianity, and then to set aside Christianity as untrue, because the floating opinions of that age were erroneous or superstitious. As well might it be attempted to deny the truth of all the science of this age, because scientific men still continue to speak with the multitude of *the sun's rising and setting*, although it is a well-established fact, that the sun neither rises nor sets, but the daily revolution of the earth upon its axis gives rise to this optical deception.

I intend, moreover, to demonstrate, that, of the four elements I have enumerated, the fourth, Phraseology, consisting of the mere modes of expression belonging to the age and nation, is equally demonstrable with the others. These were Judaisms and Orientalisms, forms of speech highly figurative or hyperbolic, which to our Occidental ears seem at first sight to have an extraordinary meaning, but on closer examination are found to relate to common and familiar things.

When these distinctions are made, it will be seen that the grounds of most of the controversies which have prevailed in the Christian Church are taken away. Many of them have arisen from pressing to a literal meaning words and phrases originally figurative. Many more have arisen from confounding opinions alluded to with doctrines affirmed.

It will be seen, that the scope of these Discourses is to remove the causes of *scepticism* and *sectarianism*, the great evils of the present age. It is to show, that a thorough study of the New Testament, in-

stead of revealing new and insurmountable difficulty in the way of its reception as a revelation from God, instead of showing that it is a dishonest record made by contemporaries with an intent to deceive, or a forgery of after times, palmed off upon the world as the production of a former age, every feature bears the impress and lineaments of its appropriate age, and carries us back, with graphic and unmistakable minuteness of particularity, to the interesting scenes of the first planting of the Gospel in Judæa, eighteen centuries ago.

The tendency of these Discourses will be to persuade the reader, that the account given in the New Testament of the origin of the Gospel and of the Christian Church is not only historically, but *philosophically*, true. The New Testament and the Christian Church are phenomena now extant in the world. Every thinking man must have some way of *accounting for the manner in which they came into existence.* If the positions taken in the following Discourses are just, the most obvious way is the true way. The New Testament is what it is, the Church assumed the form it took in the age of the Apostles, because Jesus was what he assumed to be, *a divinely inspired and authenticated Messenger from God.* Place him in that position, and everything becomes natural and consistent. Probable causes are assigned for known effects. The language, the sentiments, and the conduct of the Apostles and early Christians are accounted for by the well-known laws of the human mind. Place him in any other position, suppose him to have been *an enthusiast*, mistaking the promptings of a superior genius for Divine inspira-

tion, and his profound, calm, unerring, transcendent wisdom becomes wholly irreconcilable with the hypothesis. Such wisdom could not have inhabited the same mind with such fundamental error and hallucination. The supposition that he made claims which he *knew* did not belong to him, is made wholly impossible by an *integrity* which knew no stain, and a *piety* that never lost communion with God.

As little ground is there for the last refuge of unbelief, *that Christianity was the natural growth and production of the age in which it sprang up;* that Hebrew theology, Greek philosophy, and Oriental theosophy, mingling together in Palestine, corrected each other's errors, and combined the truth that was in all into a new and sublimer system of faith, a more perfect system of morality than the world had ever known before.

It is sufficient simply to deny that any such elements were then in existence, and that Jesus ever had access to them if there were. We know from contemporary history and literature the whole compass of Jewish thought. We know what were the then predominant sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. We know that they, each and all, had *perverted* and *debased*, instead of *perfecting*, the religion of the Mosaic dispensation. The Mishna and the Talmuds are all-sufficient documents to convince us, that the pure religion of the New Testament could never have originated in the trifling legends and the absurd puerilities of those depositories of superstition. Josephus tells us tales of the practical morality of his countrymen, which make

us agree with him in pronouncing that age and nation the most corrupt and sinful that ever cumbered the earth.

The records of Greek philosophy are open to us. We know the varieties of opinion into which the wise men of Greece were divided, and what great uncertainty hung over all their speculations. We know how imperfect were all their teachings upon the subjects of morality and religion, and how utterly impotent were they to produce a moral regeneration of society, or even to persuade men to lead a discreet and well-ordered life. And the vices of the period of the first Roman Emperors have left a dark shadow on the history of the world.

Oriental theosophy, or the mythology of the East, presents to the sober mind of the present day nothing but a shadowy region of dreams, in which reason wanders in vain to find an object which bears even a remote resemblance to any known reality.

To say, then, that the religion of Jesus was merely the culmination of the thought of the time, that Jesus was simply the man of his age, the organ by which was made articulate the truth which had been evolved by the wisdom and experience of preceding ages, is making an assertion not only erroneous, but extravagantly false. No! Christianity was not the convergency of rays of light already in the world, *it was new light from above*, shining upon the world through the mind of Jesus of Nazareth. It was not a reform indicated by the wants of the time, and precipitated by a simultaneous movement of independent minds. *It was an impulse from heaven*, which was felt first in the soul of Christ, was her-

alded by the voice in the wilderness, was inaugurated by the baptism in the Jordan, and was authenticated by miraculous powers, from the marriage of Cana to the sepulchre and the Mount of Ascension. Nothing else can adequately account to my mind for the origin of that revolution in human affairs which then and there commenced. The son of a carpenter, brought up in an obscure village of a despised nation, without education, without wealth, and without friends, could have no more accomplished it, without divine and superhuman aid, than he could have created the world.

DISCOURSE II.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

AND IF CHRIST BE NOT RISEN, THEN IS OUR PREACHING VAIN, AND YOUR FAITH IS ALSO VAIN. YEA, AND WE ARE FOUND FALSE WITNESSES OF GOD; BECAUSE WE HAVE TESTIFIED OF GOD THAT HE RAISED UP CHRIST: WHOM HE RAISED NOT UP, IF SO BE THAT THE DEAD RISE NOT. — 1 Corinthians xv. 14, 15.

CHRISTIANITY is founded on *historical facts.* Historical facts are its first and fundamental element. Take away these, and the whole superstructure falls to the ground. Such was the opinion of Paul, after having preached the Gospel for twenty years. Among those fundamental facts he places the *resurrection of Christ* as the chief corner-stone. He makes it in fact to be the Gospel itself, the glad news which the Apostles were commissioned to announce to the world. Of this event the Apostles were the chief witnesses, and the fact of having seen and conversed with him alive after his resurrection was a necessary qualification to make a person eligible as an Apostle. When the eleven were about to fill the place of Judas Iscariot, it was made a requisite in the candidate that he should have been an eyewitness to the min-

istry of Christ, and especially of his having risen from the dead. Peter, in his speech upon the occasion, holds the following language: "Wherefore, of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be *a witness with us of his resurrection.*"

Writing to the Corinthians, four-and-twenty years after the event, Paul makes use of the following remarkable language: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the Gospel* which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you *first of all* that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that *he rose again the third day* according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom a greater part remain unto this day, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And last of all *he was seen of me* also, as of one born out of due time." In this same Epistle, in another place, he makes the fact of having seen Christ after his resurrection a necessary qualification for apostleship. "Am not I an Apostle? *have not I seen* Jesus Christ our Lord?"

The historical basis of Christianity, and the primary importance of the resurrection, are testified by Peter, in his speech to Cornelius and his companions.

What is called by the Apostle Paul "*the Gospel*" which he preached, is called by Peter "*the word which God sent to the children of Israel*, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) that word ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil: for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. *Him God raised up* the third day, and *showed him openly*, not to all the people, but *unto witnesses*, chosen before of God, *even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.* And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained to be Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

The fundamental importance of the fact of the resurrection is declared often, and in many different ways, in the New Testament. When Paul came to Athens, and addressed the multitude on Mars' Hill, the burden of his discourse was understood to be "*Jesus and the resurrection.*" His commission, as the Lawgiver and Judge of mankind, according to that speech, was sealed by that event: "Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that *he*

hath raised him from the dead." In the same strain he commences his Epistle to the Romans: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead.*" Peter, in his First Epistle, expresses in language still more emphatic the bearing which the resurrection of Christ has on our hopes of immortality: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"

Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, from which we have just quoted, goes on in the strongest language to state the intimate connection which, to his mind, subsisted between the resurrection of Christ and the doctrine of immortality. "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* Yea, and *we are found false witnesses of God*, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

It is not too much to say, from these various citations, that the Apostles, the writers of the New Testament, *unanimously* considered *the resurrection of Christ* to be the main fact of the Gospel, the very

hinge upon which the whole enterprise turned. If they were mistaken in this, it was *all* a delusion, and they themselves the most miserable and unfortunate of men. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me *if the dead rise not.* Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

To this testimony of the resurrection of Christ these Apostles remained constant during their lives, and for it they freely shed their blood and died.

But God so ordered the course of things, that succeeding ages should not only have the best *direct* testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, but the strongest *indirect* evidence. Great occurrences impress themselves upon the times in which they happen. Their actual occurrence is testified not only by *words*, but by *actions* and *events.* The whole course of things is influenced and shaped by them. As causes, they produce effects, which remain to bear witness of them, and are wholly unaccountable without them. It was thus, I think, in an eminent degree, with the resurrection of Christ. If any reliance is to be placed on the narratives of the Evangelists, *a most remarkable change took place in the conduct and character, the opinions, the feelings, and the purposes of the disciples* about the time at which the resurrection is said to have taken place, and just such a change as such an event would naturally produce. That Christ was crucified there can be no doubt. That his followers were poor and illiterate men, natives of

Galilee, and strangers at Jerusalem, there can be as little reason to call in question. That they were wholly destitute of resources is evident from the fact *that they were unable to give their deceased Master the rites of sepulture.* This was done by strangers, Nicodemus the counsellor, and Joseph, a rich man of Arimathea. Their hopes in their Master had been utterly disappointed. They had come to Jerusalem with the expectation of seeing him soon a king. But instead of this he was crucified, and they were scattered. They seem to have resumed their former pursuits, and given over all expectations as the followers of Jesus. But on a sudden they rally, they come together, they deliberate in private, they act together in public, they attract multitudes, they produce a deep impression, they testify that their Master *had risen from the dead.* To that testimony they were ready to sacrifice their lives. Thousands believed their testimony, for not only were they witnesses, but there were in their midst the five hundred who had seen him alive after his public execution. Could such a change have taken place in the disciples without an adequate cause? Is it in human nature to stand forth in the face of multitudes and assert a falsehood, from which they could derive no sort of advantage, and which subjected them to persecution and death? This of course is an argument which addresses itself to the minds of men in all ages.

There are, moreover, in the narratives, *traces of great excitement* produced by this event, precisely such as would naturally be caused by an occurrence of such magnitude, interest, and importance. On the occurrence of an extraordinary event, it so ab-

sorbs men's minds that they become incapable of attending to their ordinary employments. They are seen collected in groups, exchanging their thoughts and feelings. Sympathy becomes intense, and they are unwilling to separate. We read in the Acts, that immediately on the return of the disciples to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, from which they had seen Christ ascend, they came together. "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where *abode* both Peter and James and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all *continued* with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." These particulars of *names* and *place* and *time* add greatly to the probability of the narrative. Their employment, too, prayers and supplications, is a very natural one for persons who had just witnessed such a spectacle as seeing a beloved friend ascend to heaven, and an exercise not at all likely to occupy a band of *false witnesses*, conspiring to deceive the world and delude all nations. In another place it is said of them: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people." Could anything be more natural than this enthusiasm under the circumstances?

There is another incident recorded, which furnishes a still stronger proof that something extraordinary had occurred. The last thing which men are disposed to do is to relinquish their property. They

usually grasp it with tenacious hold till their hands are unclasped by death. That must be a mighty impulse which has power to overcome this attachment. In these first days of the existence of the Christian Church, the phenomenon was presented of a community giving up their private property, their own hard earnings and careful savings, and the inheritances transmitted to them by their fathers, and throwing it into a common stock for the support of all. The most rational explanation of this anomalous fact is *the mighty impression made by the resurrection of Jesus.* "And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need." In another place it is said: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things that he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." The reason of this, as it seems to me, is casually and unconsciously thrown in by the historian himself: "*And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,* and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold and laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

These things, in my judgment, show a *very great* disturbance of the ordinary condition of the human mind in the first Christian community, and it can be accounted for only on the supposition of the occur-

rence of an extraordinary event, and that event was the resurrection of Jesus. The natural effect of it would be, to turn the minds of those who believed it, and especially those who witnessed it, most powerfully to the spiritual world. The realities of that world, instead of dwelling, as they had done, in a dim and distant obscurity, were brought near, and they nearly absorbed their attention. By a natural revulsion, the things of this world, from having engrossed too much, occupied too little of their attention, and they adopted a mode of living, which, if it had been continued, would have ultimately been destructive of society.

As striking, deep, and lasting an impression was made upon the *character*, the *sentiments*, and the *purposes* of the disciples. A total change took place in them, corresponding to their new experience. Before the resurrection of their Master, they appear worldly, ambitious, narrow-minded. Afterwards they become spiritual, disinterested, generous; their thoughts and purposes are turned to heaven and heavenly things. A piety and a spirituality breathe through their writings and their conduct, which you search for in vain among all the records of the human race. As we read them, we find ourselves in the very presence of heavenly things. They seem to "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ their Lord." What could possibly make a deeper impression upon any one of us, than repeated, certain, sober, and assured interviews with a departed friend, returned from the invisible world, thus making immortality sure, changing faith into vision, and hope into certainty? To us it would be much,

to the disciples it was more. It not only made them certain of immortality, but it constituted them its heralds and witnesses to the world. It was a seal at once of Christ's mission and their own. It made them the main agents in the mightiest enterprise that was ever undertaken, the spiritual regeneration of the world. They rose up at once, from timid, uncultivated fishermen and peasants, to magnanimous heroes, apostles, martyrs, prepared to face a multitude, and to stand unappalled before kings and magistrates. And in Jerusalem, the very city where but a few weeks ago they had slunk away from public notice, on the crucifixion of their Master, utterly discomfited and disheartened, they stand forth and accuse their countrymen and their rulers as being guilty of an atrocious and malicious murder, and a murder only extenuated by their ignorance of the magnitude of the crime they were perpetrating.

Thus it is that succeeding ages have had, not only direct, but *circumstantial*, proof of the resurrection of Jesus. The Apostles and primitive disciples bore witness, not only by words, but by *deeds*, of their belief, at least, of the return of their Master to life, after he had been consigned to the tomb. The general tone of the whole record corroborates the fact, from the commencement of the Acts to the end of the Apocalypse.

This event, in fact, constituted a new era in the history of the world. Piety, from that moment, started on a new and higher level. Eternity, thus revealed and brought near, began to exert a constraining power on the consciousness, the character, and the life of man. The first day of the week was consecrated

for ever to be a day of commemoration, of religious meditation, of public worship, of holy employment.

But the resurrection of Christ being thus established by human testimony, and by circumstantial evidence, what was its influence in the world? *It was to give authority to the Gospel, and to establish the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.* It authenticated Christ as the Ambassador of God. It made his word to be law, and his promises to be regarded as the truth. It enthroned him in the reverence and the confidence of mankind. As it is expressed in the splendid, though somewhat indefinite, language of Oriental hyperbole, by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, *when he raised him from the dead*, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

The same idea is expressed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in still more magnificent

phraseology. The language is enriched by a greater exuberance of metaphors, drawn from Christ's *sonship* and *priesthood*, by the force of one of which he is made heir of all things, and of the other is said to have expiated the sins of the world and "tasted death for every man": "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and controlling all things by his powerful word, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they."

Now, how infinitely absurd would such language as this have appeared, had Christ never risen from the dead! But it was borne out and justified, in the fervid imaginations of the Orientals, by the exaltation which that event gave to his person and his religion. It established his Gospel to be God's word and law, and therefore clothed Christ with God's authority, which, in Eastern phrase, is being placed at God's right hand, to share, as God's son, in his dominion. The same fact made the spread of his religion a necessity, and its universality inevitable. Christ was, therefore, in a spiritual sense, *the heir of the world.* When here on earth, he appeared to be clothed with miraculous power and with miraculous knowledge, the most resplendent of the Divine attributes, and thus stood as God's image and rep-

resentative on earth. His mission constituted an epoch in the history of the world and in the revolution of ages. To it the ages before looked forward, to it the ages since have looked back. To all this glory he ascended, and *without the resurrection* not a whisper of all this exaltation would ever have been heard on earth. It is the *risen Saviour* who is head of the Church. It is this fact which gives the Communion any rational significance or any moral power. It is the spiritual presence of the *risen* Saviour which gives that rite the power to pierce the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world, dispels the fear of dissolution, and brings on earth the life of heaven.

In conclusion, *the resurrection of Christ established the doctrine of the immortality of the soul*, and made it an article, not only of speculative belief, but of practical influence. It is in the way of God's providence, to teach by particular facts, and not by general principles. It is the constitution of the human mind, to be taught by ascending from particular facts to general principles, and not by descending from general principles to particular facts. *One palpable fact* makes a stronger impression upon us than volumes of speculation. God revealed himself to the children of Israel, not as the God of the whole earth, but as "the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage," and, having established this fact, left them to infer, by the light of their own reason, if, having done this, he could be any other than the God of the whole earth. So, having raised Christ from the dead, who had preached the doctrine of immortality, he left mankind

to the conclusion of their own reason, whether death were necessarily the destruction of our being, and whether it were not the purpose of the Creator of man to raise him to a new and immortal life. "As by man came death, so by man came the resurrection of the dead." God knew the principles of the human mind which he addressed, and he knew the inference men would draw, that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive," and the result has commended the wisdom of the arrangement. Furnished with this single fact, the twelve Apostles, obscure individuals of a despised race though they were, and persecuted everywhere, accomplished more in establishing the conviction of the immortality of the soul, than all the philosophers of the heathen world, though aided by the highest rank, the most extensive learning, and consummate eloquence. The private schools of the philosophers were forsaken for the humble churches of the Apostles, for the simple reason, that what was taught in one as a *philosophic probability* was promulgated in the other as a *positive, ascertained fact.* Zeno, Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus had propounded many things that seemed like truth, but they were all uncertain, and different from each other. Truth is but one, and Christ taught it without error and with satisfactory authority. All those philosophers had yielded to the common lot of humanity, they had died like other men, and their ashes had been blown about the earth, or buried beneath it. Christ had not only taught, but *demonstrated*, immortality. *He had returned to life*, been conversant for forty days with his former companions, and then ascended to heaven in their sight.

Here, then, was something *additional* to the light of nature, on a subject the most interesting of all others to the human mind, and it quickened men's moral and religious natures, and gave confidence to their hopes of immortality, precisely in proportion to their reliance on the original testimony of the Apostles.

Thus it is that Christianity is founded on historical facts, facts of such a nature as to be the proper subjects of human testimony, submitted to the calm scrutiny of the senses, showing themselves in the conduct and sentiments to which they led, and impressing themselves upon the age in which they happened.

Among them, and towering far above them all, *is the resurrection of Christ.* It is the keystone of the arch of Christian faith. Take this away, and it all falls a heap of ruins. The Christian Church is a building without a foundation, our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain. "But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

DISCOURSE III.

REALITY OF PERSONS, TIMES, AND PLACES.

THE FORMER TREATISE HAVE I MADE, O THEOPHILUS, OF ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN BOTH TO DO AND TEACH, UNTIL THE DAY IN WHICH HE WAS TAKEN UP, AFTER THAT HE THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST HAD GIVEN COMMANDMENTS UNTO THE APOSTLES WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN: TO WHOM ALSO HE SHOWED HIMSELF ALIVE AFTER HIS PASSION, BY MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS, BEING SEEN OF THEM FORTY DAYS, AND SPEAKING OF THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD. — Acts i. 1 - 3.

Most persons, on reading the New Testament, receive from it a strong impression of *historic truth*. They feel that they are reading of *real persons* and *real transactions*. It has been so from the beginning. The bare reading of the record has generally produced faith. There have been millions and millions of believers in Christianity, yet few of them have read any treatise on the evidences of Christianity. The bare, naked narrative, just as it stands on the sacred pages, has been sufficient to produce belief. Ninety-nine out of a hundred have believed *the whole*, and the sceptical have been compelled to believe it up to the very borders of the supernatural.

It is next to impossible, for any person possessing ordinary human faculties, to read the New Testament, and entertain a serious doubt that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, or call in question the reality of his ministry. The real existence of his most prominent Apostles is no less unquestionable. Peter, John, and Paul are as real to us as Cæsar, Antony, and Cicero. There is the same difference to us when we read of them and the imaginary beings of romance, as there is when we see a real child beside a lifeless doll, a living man beside a dead statue, a cluster of natural flowers beside a bunch of painted ribbons. The sceptic cannot deny this, as I have already said, up to the very borders of the supernatural. And then the supernatural is so interwoven with the natural, they so interpenetrate each other, they are so connected, as cause and effect, and so grow out of each other and into each other, that they cannot be separated without violence, and without utter destruction to the whole tissue. This is the strong ground of Christianity. This is the reason why it has obtained so wide a reception in the world, without any argumentation. It has all the marks of simple nature so plainly, *substance*, *form*, *complexion*, *action*, that it is as spontaneous to believe, as to believe in the existence of external nature, which daily presents itself to our senses.

It is the purpose of this discourse to detect, analyze, define, and enumerate the causes which produce this almost universal belief in the historical truth of the New Testament. Every historical transaction, real or fictitious, must have *a time* and *a place*, must have *actors*, or persons concerned in it;

and, to be credible, must have *consistency* and *reasonableness*, that is to say, the events must agree with each other, the persons must act in character, and the various movements must be capable of being accounted for by those motives which ordinarily govern the conduct of human beings. All these features of truth, I contend, are found in the New Testament.

In the first place, the narrative of the New Testament has *a time*. It is not placed at a period *antehistoric* or *unhistoric*. The time of the events related by the Evangelists and Apostles is placed at a period which embraces the reigns of four of the first five of the Roman Emperors, a period when the civilization, the literature, and intelligence of the ancient world reached the highest point of development. They were contemporary with three of the greatest Roman historians, and with Josephus and Philo, almost the only eminent writers in the Greek language which the Jewish nation ever produced. The period, then, was eminently *historic*. The eminent men and most important transactions of that age are almost as well known as the conspicuous events and characters of England during the last century. The attempt to interpolate a chapter into the history of the world in such an age as that, which should introduce a number of the most conspicuous individuals of the time, would be utterly desperate; as much so as for a writer of the present day to forge a journal of Franklin in Paris, during the Revolutionary war, and introduce into it the names of the principal men then upon the stage in such a way that the narrative could possibly be true. No ingenuity can make his-

torical events contemporaneous which were not so, and no care could prevent a fictitious narrative from betraying itself in this particular. *The birth of Christ*, the first event recorded, is represented to have taken place during the reign of Augustus Cæsar. The time of his accession to the empire, and of his death, are as well known as the commencement and termination of the French Revolution. One of the last historical events is the trial of Paul before Nero, at Rome. The time of his elevation to the empire, and his suicide, are as well known as the career of Napoleon. Two intermediate Emperors are named in their proper order, Tiberius and Claudius Cæsar. *The crucifixion of Christ* is said to have taken place under the administration and by the agency of Pontius Pilate, as Roman governor, and of Caiaphas, the high-priest of the Jews. Roman history informs us that Pilate was in fact governor of Judæa from about the twenty-seventh to the thirty-seventh year of the Christian era. That Caiaphas was high-priest during the whole ministry of Jesus, appears from the fact that Josephus mentions his having been appointed to that office by the predecessor of Pilate, and removed from office by the President of Syria after he had sent Pilate home to Rome to be tried for maleadministration.

Dates and periods are dangerous things to introduce into a fictitious narrative. One of the opponents of Jesus is made to say to him, near the commencement of his ministry, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?" This passage has given commentators some difficulty. The first temple was built in seven years,

the second in twenty-one. The temple built by Herod, and the one in which Jesus taught, was so far completed as to be used within ten years from its commencement. In what sense, then, could the Jewish temple be said to have been forty-six years in building? Josephus tells us, that in the reign of Nero, more than twenty years after the ministry of Christ, the temple was *finished.* The building must have been going on then at the time of Christ, and computing the time backwards to the time of its commencement, as dated by the same Josephus, about forty-six years must have elapsed. So that a date which at first sight presents a difficulty becomes, when explained, a means of ascertaining the period of Christ's ministry, instead of overthrowing the credibility of the narrative.

So much for the *time* when the events recorded in the New Testament took place. Let us now look at the circumstances of *place.* The New Testament is full of *local allusions*, which, if consistent with facts, *are strong features of historical reality.* Judæa, the scene of Christ's ministry, remains in its general characteristics as it was in his age. The river Jordan, the Sea of Galilee, the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, are unchanged. Most of the towns and villages are still recognized. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, are still extant. The identity of other and inferior places is still preserved with greater or less accuracy. There is enough of *locality* in the New Testament to create a strong impression of reality, by a reference to things as they now exist. He who now goes from Galilee to Jerusalem must needs go *through* Samaria. Jacob's well is still there, where the Saviour sat

and talked with the woman who came out to draw water. He who goes from Galilee to Jerusalem must go "*up*," and he who travels from Jerusalem to Jericho, as did the man who fell among thieves, must go "*down*." He who now visits Jerusalem, and sees the elevation upon which the temple stood, must perceive how truth manifests itself in little circumstances. "Two men," said the Saviour, "went *up* into the temple to pray." Philip "went *down* from Jerusalem to the city of Samaria" to preach the Gospel after the ascension of Christ; and no one can make the same journey now without going down. What was once Bethany is now about eight furlongs from Jerusalem, and a person now travelling thence to Jerusalem would "*descend*" the Mount of Olives, as Christ did when he was met by the triumphal procession which conducted him into Jerusalem a few days before his crucifixion.

The journeys and voyages of Paul are strictly *geographical*, from the nightly expedition of the horsemen who escorted him from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, to the last stage of his travels from the "Three Taverns" to the city of Rome. His travels through Asia Minor and Greece could not be more true to times, distances, and position of places, if they were made by mathematical calculation. In a true narrative, such things are accurate without labor, but in a fictitious one, *no* care can avoid errors and improbability.

I next proceed to speak of the *persons* introduced as the actors who were concerned in the great enterprise of introducing and establishing Christianity in

the world. I begin with Paul, and I know of no person in all antiquity whose real existence is more certain. His Epistles bear upon the face of them the strongest marks of reality. These marks are perhaps generally indefinable, but no less convincing, and they leave no doubt that such a man as Paul lived and acted as is there related, and that his whole course of life was based *on his belief in the divine mission and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.* This is evident without any critical examination. But a sagacious observer and acute reasoner, Archdeacon Paley, has placed the genuineness and authenticity of the Epistles of Paul entirely beyond question, by comparing them with each other, and with the sketches of Paul's history which are given by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. There are so many cases of minute and evidently undesigned coincidence between the two, that they do not leave a shadow of a doubt that the enterprising and indefatigable missionary of the one was the writer of the other. In the narrative and the Epistles there are introduced two Roman governors, Felix and Festus, together with Agrippa and Berenice, grandchildren of Herod the Great, and two Roman Emperors who are known to us in profane history, Claudius and Nero, and in accordance with it.

Next in distinctness to Paul comes Peter. We may say of him, too, that his character and history are singularly real. We have seen many ourselves of the same type of temperament and disposition. Ardent, impulsive, affectionate, but wanting in reflection, steadiness, and perseverance. He rushes headlong into enterprise and danger, but has not

the coolness and firmness which are necessary to bear himself well and wisely when overtaken by peril or temptation. But if he sometimes does wrong, he never sins by premeditation, and he is ever ready to acknowledge and lament his aberrations.

Next among the Apostolic group comes John, the deepest and most powerful character of them all, and most nearly resembling the Saviour whom he loved. Modest, retiring, contemplative, he makes us aware, though we do not see him often, that there is in him vast reach of mind and force of character.

We now turn from the disciples to the Master, and we say, that, transcendent as was his character, there is nothing in all history more real. No suspicion ever crosses the mind that it is fictitious. Fictitious characters are usually mere imitations of something in real life. They are at most a combination of qualities already exhibited in different individuals. But the character of Christ is *wholly original.* It has no model in any person that ever existed, nor can it be traced in any number of the human race. The moral perfections of his character could not have been created by any unassisted imagination. No such course of action could have been invented as is attributed to him, no such discourses could have been put into his mouth, *except by a wisdom as unequalled as his own.* No human genius could create an imaginary being like Christ, and place him in the elevated position of the Light of the world, the Lawgiver of the nations, the Redeemer of the soul and spiritual Saviour of mankind, and carry him through a ministry of three years, in which he should be continually placed in the most trying

and difficult circumstances, and make him act and speak in character without a failure, and everywhere with triumphant wisdom and consistency. To *imagine* such a life as Christ's, would be almost as great a miracle as to live it. And this miracle must have been performed by no less than four different writers. And then the miracle is multiplied fourfold, with this additional improbability, that four writers should have *happened* to invent precisely the same character.

Besides, the human mind, by a law of its nature, finds itself compelled *rationally to account for every phenomenon which is presented to it.* An effect must have a cause, adequate to its production. They who saw, this morning, the day spread itself over the earth, knew that it was caused by the rising of the sun, because it was dark before, but it has been light ever since. Such an event was the advent of Christ. His birth spontaneously became the greatest epoch of the ages. From it the centuries preceding are compelled to reckon backward, from it the ages since are made to reckon downward. It is inconceivable that a *fictitious* being, an *imaginary* creation of the human brain, could produce such a revolution in human affairs. The broad, long shadow of the mountain *demonstrates* its vastness. We hear at a distance the roar of the ocean, and we are filled with astonishment and awe. We arrive at its shore, and the mystery is all explained. Its mighty bulk, its tall, tumbling waves, as they thunder upon the cliff or break upon the beach, *reveal* to us the cause why the atmosphere is jarred, and the earth is shaken by the power of the ocean storm. So we are disposed

to wonder at the great changes produced by Christianity in the world. Nations which were Pagan became the worshippers of the one true God. Tribes which were savage became civilized. Religious rites which were absurd or obscene were abandoned. Amusements which were bloody, cruel, and indecent were renounced. The frequency and the atrocity of wars were mitigated. A gentleness and humanity spread themselves over all the relations of life, which poets had not imagined, and charitable institutions sprang up, of which heathen philanthropy had formed not the most distant conception. Whence did all these things come? Open the New Testament and the mystery is revealed. Contemplate the character, the doctrines, and the credentials of Jesus, and you discover at a glance the *adequate cause* of this mighty transformation. Look on Christ, the spotless and undefiled. Behold the moral miracle of one in human form treading all the paths of duty, amidst trial and temptation before which every other one of the millions of our race has fallen, yet without sin. Hear him speak as never man spake, promulgating a doctrine which surpasses in wisdom all that sages have ever uttered, and thus develop a religion which contradicts no law of human nature, lays a solid basis for society, and corrects, so far as they can be corrected, all the disorders to which humanity is subjected. See him authenticate his mission from God by healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, stilling the tempest, and raising the dead, and, more than all, returning to life from the rocky caverns of the guarded sepulchre, and conversing forty days with his former friends and disciples, and

you encounter a cause sufficiently powerful to account for the mighty impulse which was given to the human race about the period of the Christian era. We come to the stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, which has ever since been filling the earth. No mere phantom of the human imagination could have done this. Nothing but a solid reality could have done it. Nothing short of just such a being as Christ could have done it. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The narrative of the Evangelists has been read with immediate and spontaneous belief in all ages, on account of its *consistency*. I mean by consistency, its correspondence with what we know of human nature, and what we know of the persons with whom Christ was brought in contact. Not only was the character of Christ to be invented and sustained, but the characters of all those with whom he had intercourse. Not only was he to speak and act in correspondence with his high claim as the Light of the world, the Saviour of mankind, the Resurrection and the Life; but those with whom he associated, his friends and his enemies, his family and his disciples, must bear themselves in such a manner as to correspond with their enmity or affection, their hopes, fears, prejudices, and prepossessions. This is done with such perfect success, that the thought never crosses our minds of fiction or exaggeration.

In the Gospel of John we are presented with various persons, and groups of persons, in whose presence Christ is reported to have wrought miracles;

and then the conversations are detailed which ensued. I venture to assert, that there are not more lifelike pictures in the whole compass of literature.

I begin with the nocturnal interview with Nicodemus. Who does not see the wary old senator encountering the youthful Saviour, the one all caution and prudence, yet on the whole disposed to be fair-minded and conscientious? The best part of him spoke out in the candid confession: "Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." The worst part appeared in the fact of his coming to Jesus by night, for fear of open disgrace, since he held a high office in the national council. What more natural than that a candid mind, unsupported by decisive character and a courageous heart, should thus have attempted to make a compromise between his duty and his interest? What more natural than that there should have been many among the higher classes precisely in that predicament, — almost persuaded to be Christians, but wanting the magnanimity to avow themselves? What could be more appropriate than the language of Christ upon this occasion? It was addressed to a man of high culture, on a vital, and at the same time delicate, subject. The language is sublimely figurative, yet faithfully true. It mingles in due measure instruction with reproof. It is searching, yet respectful, calculated to impress and overawe a mind prepared by a refined culture to appreciate it. No human being ever read this relation without the strongest impression of truth and reality.

The woman of Samaria! Who that has read the

story has ever failed to believe that there *was* such a person, and that she spoke and acted as the Evangelist describes? How natural, under the circumstances, her wonder that there *could* be a Jew so liberal and generous as even to speak to a Samaritan, and she a woman! A circumstance is thrown in which heightens the credibility, because it adds to the naturalness of the scene, — *the woman left her water-pot*, and hasted away to the city, and told the people, with the natural exaggeration of astonishment, "He told me all things that ever I did." How perfectly in keeping the surprise of his disciples to find him talking with a Samaritan woman, and how expressive of the awful distance which the exalted character of Christ had put between him and his disciples, that they *do not dare to express* their wonder by uttering a word! The Gospel has every appearance of having been written *before the destruction of Jerusalem.* What forger of fictions would have dared, if he had had the genius to do it, to risk his character and credit by uttering the sublime prediction: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

The only other narrative of the Evangelist, which I shall have space to notice, is that of the raising of Lazarus. As this is the most stupendous miracle of Christ, so the scenes and conversations which led to it, accompanied, and followed it, are given with the greatest minuteness and particularity; and it is

not too much to say, that they produce the deepest impressions of truth, — the news of the sickness of the distant friend, the gloom which overshadowed the house of mourning, the sorrow of the sisters, expressing itself in different ways, appropriate to the character of each, the approach to the grave, the paroxysm of grief which the sight of the spot occasions, the groans and the weeping of Jesus himself, the words by which the slumbers of the dead were broken, the wrappings with which the buried man came forth, the very prayer which Jesus uttered before he ventured to pronounce the most thrilling command that was ever uttered by man, "Lazarus, come forth!" — all these things bespeak the accuracy of *an eyewitness*, and, although connected with an *interruption of the ordinary course of nature*, produce upon us the strongest impression of truth and reality.

I might go on to point out the marks of truth and reality which occur in the minute details of circumstances attending the resurrection of Jesus, — the particulars related by John as an eyewitness; the going with Peter to the sepulchre; the fact that *they both went into* it, and had the most ample means of ascertaining that the body of Jesus was not there; the interview in the upper chamber and at the seaside.

But I forbear, and merely observe, in conclusion, that these things bring us to the margin of the supernatural, and we step over it into the miraculous without any severe shock to our faith. So interwoven and intermixed are the supernatural events with those within the ordinary laws of nature, that

we find it impossible to separate them, and we are brought to debate the last question which embarrasses the full exercise of unlimited faith, the *reasonableness* of this especial providence by which Christianity has been introduced into the world. We are naturally and justly cautious in the reception of the supernatural. Under ordinary circumstances, it *is* incredible. The reasons why God established and upholds a fixed order of nature are obvious and cogent. There must be a sufficient ground of expectation for the future, and of belief for the distant and the past, or the mind, being unable to discriminate between the probable and the improbable, would fall a prey to superstition, or, being unable to count on a fixed order of nature, would sink into utter imbecility. But the moral dignity and spotless integrity of Jesus exempt him from all suspicion of having deceived the world, and his unapproachable wisdom lifts him above all liability to the delusions of enthusiasm. The objects of his religion, the spiritual enlightenment and salvation of the world, we pronounce to be worthy the special interposition of the God of nature and the Father of mankind. The time and the place at which he appeared seem opportune for the dissemination of a positive doctrine and a permanent form of administration over the world. And the history of the world from that time to this has borne witness, that Christianity, whatever may have been its origin, has been the greatest boon that Providence ever conferred on man.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

ALL THINGS ARE DELIVERED UNTO ME OF MY FATHER: AND NO MAN KNOWETH THE SON BUT THE FATHER; NEITHER KNOWETH ANY MAN THE FATHER, SAVE THE SON, AND HE TO WHOMSOEVER THE SON WILL REVEAL HIM. — Matthew xi. 27.

THE life, the words, and actions of Jesus being admitted as historical facts, they reveal and make certain another historical fact, which is situated near the very centre of the subject concerning which we are treating, *the consciousness of Jesus himself of what he was.* He must have known who and what he was himself, whether he had or had not supernatural communication with God, the power of working miracles, and divine authority to establish a new religion in the world, to proclaim its laws and appoint its ritual. Is there evidence that there *was* such a consciousness in him?

In every intelligent being there is such a thing as a *consciousness.* The thing which is signified by this word is so simple, that it cannot be defined or made more clear by the use of any other word. Other terms may illustrate it, but they cannot make it more

plain. We may say, that it is the continued and certain knowledge that we, each one of us, have, that he is one individual being, and not two or three beings, — that he is the same being to-day that he was yesterday, and last year; the conviction that we have certain powers of thought and will, — that we sustain certain *relations* of brother, sister, son, daughter, father, — certain offices of master, servant, magistrate, teacher, — have the power to labor, suffer, and enjoy. Concerning these things, while the mind is sane, there can be no mistake.

Every human being has this consciousness. He not only has it, but *it becomes the basis of all his conduct.* The father daily exercises the authority which he is conscious of rightfully possessing over his children. The magistrate daily goes forth and takes his seat on the bench of justice or in the chair of state. Were one to take that seat who had not been appointed to it, he could not act his part. He could not sustain himself for any length of time. He would be confused and discomfited, because there would be *a continual contradiction between his position and his consciousness.* The consciousness that he was *acting a part* would throw him into utter confusion. Or if he preserved his gravity and persevered in his pretensions, it would be certain that he was *insane*, that his consciousness, or rather his mind, had become diseased.

So, moreover, we cannot be long with any person, without *becoming aware of his consciousness*, what he conceives himself to be. It is asserted or implied in every word, in every act, in every look. We need only to listen for a short time to the conversation of

an utter stranger, to learn who he is, where he has lived, what relations in life he has sustained. Of these things we do not conceive it possible for him to have a false impression.

The identity of another is marked by possession of *a certain species of knowledge.* There have been travellers who have visited regions unknown to any other individual of the community to which they belong. This knowledge distinguishes them from every other, and enables them to speak with authority on subjects upon which all others are silent. Another has pursued a science far beyond his associates. He can converse with knowledge and certainty on points on which they are in the dark. Individuals of distinguished attainments have been recognized in public conveyances by the fact that they displayed knowledge of certain subjects wholly beyond the measure of ordinary men, and known to be possessed by them alone.

It is the purpose of this discourse to apply these principles to Jesus Christ. *What consciousness exhibited itself in his thoughts, words, and actions, and in the position he assumed in relation to God and to mankind?*

In the first place, negatively, did he anywhere exhibit the consciousness that he was God? It is maintained that he was both God and man. If he was God, he must have been *conscious* that he was God. Nothing can be more absurd than to assert that he was God, and was not conscious that he was God. If he was ever conscious that he was God, he must *at all times* have been conscious that he was God; for God is an unchangeable being, and

must be always conscious that he is the same. He could not have been conscious that he was God at one time, and was not God at another time. Consciousness is a thing which cannot be shifted from one being to another. Identity of being is identity of consciousness. It is a contradiction in terms to assert that *one* being can be conscious of being *two*. If Christ had had the consciousness that he was God, the first duty he would have taught his disciples would have been that of worshipping him. If he had had this consciousness that he was the Sovereign of the universe, and the Creator of all things, could he have *concealed* this consciousness? or if he did, did he not live and act under a disguise?

And then he *did* things which were wholly inconsistent with the consciousness that he was God. He *prayed*, and often. He could not have prayed, if he were conscious that he was God. It is no cure for this difficulty to say, that he had two natures, and prayed in his human nature. *His consciousness must have pervaded both natures*, and could not have been absent from either of them for a single moment. If it could be withdrawn from either nature, that nature did not make a part of his essential and permanent being. *He denied that he possessed omniscience.* "Of that day and hour knoweth not the Son, but the Father only." This he could not have done, if he had been conscious that he was God. The *words* of every being are a revelation of his consciousness. When God speaks, it is with the consciousness that he *is* God, and it is generally to claim or declare some divine attribute. As in the annunciation of the Decalogue, he says, "I am the Lord thy God: thou shalt have no other gods before me."

If he had been really the Almighty God, not only ought the consciousness that he was God to have incidentally revealed itself, but candor demanded that it should be openly and perpetually declared. The *real* ground of his claim to the obedience of mankind would have been that he was God.

The most direct way to secure that obedience would have been to declare that he was God. Jesus, when he sat down on the Mount, or in the ship, to teach the multitude, should have prefaced his discourse with some such preamble as this: "I am Jehovah, your God, who once gave your fathers the law from Horeb, amid the flames, the thunder, and the smoke. Therefore ye shall keep the commandments which I give you this day." If he was conscious that he was God, it is difficult to conceive that he would have adopted any other phraseology. It is true, that on one occasion he was accused of making himself God by calling himself the Son of God. If he had been conscious that he was God, it is wholly impossible to suppose that he would have shrunk from the charge. Integrity and self-respect would have forbidden it. But he made no such avowal. He declared that he called himself the Son of God, not because he claimed to be God, but because God "had sanctified and sent him into the world."

In the second place, negatively, does he manifest the consciousness that he is a mere man? By a mere man, I mean one without supernatural endowments, and without extraordinary relations to God and the human race. I answer emphatically, No. From his baptism to his crucifixion there was some-

thing in his whole bearing which could spring from nothing but conscious elevation above the level of unaided, uninspired humanity.

There is no law more universal, than that *the demeanor of men shall adjust itself to their position.* It is instinctive and spontaneous. There is a universal sense of *propriety*, which dictates and demands it.

In those countries where the supreme power is hereditary, or descends to collateral branches of a royal or imperial family, there are not seldom elevations from a private station to supreme dignity and sovereign authority. The transfer is scarcely made before its consequences are visible. An entire change is witnessed in the deportment of the new occupant of the throne. A new *consciousness* enters into him, and pervades all his thoughts, words, and actions. There is a new dignity, a new sense of authority, a spontaneous assumption of superiority, a serene magnanimity, which is undisturbed by the ordinary occurrences of life.

This conscious dignity of position, as it seems to me, shone out in the whole demeanor of Jesus, after his inauguration by John the Baptist and the descent of the Holy Ghost. During the former part of his life, he had occupied an humble sphere in the world. The reputed son of a carpenter, he had lived in an obscure village. But when he returned from the Jordan "in the power of the Spirit," he was still just as humble in external appearance, but *a spontaneous dignity rose up in him*, unapproached by any one who ever wore the vestments of mortality. Time, as it passed on, demonstrated that it was not assumed.

It was the natural expression of *the consciousness of the position* he held in the Divine administration of the world, as the promised Messiah who had a place in the Divine counsels from the foundation of the world, the great Shepherd, who was to gather into one fold all the scattered tribes of the human race.

This conscious dignity never forsook him. It made a part of him. It impressed his disciples with an overpowering reverence. It filled the surrounding multitudes with awe. We perceive it in every page of the Gospels, and it strikes us as exhibiting a manifest congruity. It is a strong corroboration of our faith. It displays an exact coincidence between internal consciousness and outward profession. It makes the spontaneous demeanor and public claim of Jesus harmonious, and each lends propriety to the other.

In the third place, then, positively, *he does manifest the consciousness of immediate supernatural communication with God.*

He speaks of himself *as having a knowledge of God and his counsels*, which no one else possessed. To Nicodemus he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we *do know*, and testify that we *have seen;* and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things. And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Here he is speaking expressly concerning *the nature of the Christian religion*, that it was to be *spiritual*, and not national and external. Not only did he know it, he affirms, supernaturally, but

he was the *only* depositary at that moment of this knowledge. Nearly the same sense is conveyed in the passage from which the text is taken. It expresses *the fulness of knowledge of divine things* which was to be possessed under the new dispensation, so superior to that possessed by the wisest of men under the Mosaic economy. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. *All things* are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Many persons suppose that there is a great mystery here; that Christ is speaking of his *metaphysical nature* as known only to God, and so it must be the metaphysical nature of God which is known to Christ alone. But the connection does not point to such a sense. Christ's *metaphysical* nature could *not* have been made known by revelation to himself. It must have been made known to him by *spontaneous, original consciousness.* One of the objects of spontaneous consciousness is to inform us what we are, and what we have done, and what we have been doing ever since we have had a being. "Who the Messiah is," must refer, then, to *the purposes of his mission and the nature of his religion.* These were the things which had been kept concealed from the wise and prudent, but were now revealed unto babes, — to men of ordinary attainments and under-

standing. *All these things* were delivered unto him by his Heavenly Father.

This point of *the consciousness of supernatural knowledge* receives further illustration from Christ's last prayer with his disciples. This was one of the most solemn acts of his life. In addressing the omniscient God, his inmost consciousness must of course come out. "Father," said he, "the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should *give eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they *might know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

More solemn language than this cannot be found. It was uttered in the presence of God, and to God, and at the approach of death. It must therefore be considered as expressing the inmost consciousness of his soul. Its testimony is both negative and positive. He could not have been conscious that he was God, as he calls the Being whom he addressed as the *only true God;* or rather, he must have been conscious that he was not God. The testimony is positive, that he felt himself to have received a divine mission: "And Jesus Christ, *whom thou hast sent.*" The object of that mission was *revelation*, the *communication* of a knowledge which he had received from God. "That *they might know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." It was not the metaphysical nature of God that he was to make known, for that is revealed through his works, and is open to the investigations of philosophy, but his *moral nature*, his *paternal character*,

and his *purposes concerning man.* Neither was it the metaphysical nature of Christ that he dwelt upon in his teaching. Concerning this he is profoundly silent. It is *the purposes of his mission, the nature of his kingdom, the essential character of his religion,* upon which he discourses. This is further evident from *the nature of the faith* they were to cherish in him. It was not that *by nature* he was this or that, but that his doctrines were an express revelation from God. "I have glorified thee on the earth; *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* . . . . . I have *manifested thy name* unto the men which thou hast given me. . . . . Now they have known that whatsoever thou hast given me *are of thee.* For I have given them *the words which thou gavest me;* and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that *thou didst send me.*" "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

Now I know of no words in which Christ could have expressed more fully, calmly, rationally, and explicitly, the objects of his mission and ministry on earth. There is not the least shadow of mysticism or enthusiasm in this admirable prayer. The impression is, in the first place, full and perfect on the mind of the reader, that no human being that ever lived could have *forged* such a prayer and put it into Christ's mouth. In the second place, it all evidently flows out of *a deep and solemn consciousness of a mission from God,* and of the reception of a supernatural revelation from him. Concerning this mission and this revelation, as it was a matter of consciousness, supposing his mind to be rightly constituted

and in a healthy state, there could have been no mistake. A *supernatural* connection with God is asserted over and over again. On one occasion his disciples demand, as a full and decisive proof of his divine commission, that *he should show them the Father*, not, as some might be led to think, as a matter of childish curiosity, but of certain assurance that they were following one clothed with divine authority. "Show us," said they, "the Father, and it sufficeth us." It sufficeth not our curiosity, but our faith. Show us some outward manifestation of God, or of God's presence, such as Moses showed the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and we shall no longer doubt whether the Master we follow be sent of God. Jesus answers, that in *himself* his disciples have had a clear manifestation of God. "Hast thou been so long time with me, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father?" He then goes on to explain himself,—that his *doctrines* and his *miracles* are from God, and are of such a nature as to convince the hearer and the beholder that he could not have produced them unless God were *with* him and *in* him. Belief in Christ was to be grounded on his *doctrines* and on his *miracles*, and not, as in the Mosaic religion, on any *external* manifestation of God's presence. "Believest thou not that I am *in* the Father, and the Father *in* me?" Of that indwelling of the Father he could only *testify*. He could not prove it, because it was a matter of *consciousness*. The proof he offered to *others* was his *doctrines* and his *miracles*, of which every one was a competent judge. Could such words be

uttered, could such miracles be wrought, by one who had no miraculous connection with God? "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." I, for one, cannot conceive of more calm, clear, and definite language, in which Christ's connection with God could have been expressed.

There seems to me to be in the whole demeanor and language of Jesus a mingled tone of sadness and sublimity, which corresponds to the consciousness we must suppose him to have possessed of his high destiny and relations, in contrast with that tragical end which awaited his ministry on earth.

His peculiar relations to God and to mankind, as the Mediator between God and man, the Founder of a universal religion, the First that was to rise from the dead, involving the bloody and cruel death he was to suffer, which was fully foreseen in its minutest circumstances, — these things set him apart as inaccessible to all human sympathy, and gave his whole character an unearthly, anomalous, unapproachable cast, which has contributed much to that cloud of mysticism the Church has thrown around the person of Christ. *This consciousness marked his individuality*, and it flowed out in his language and bearing everywhere. We see it in his interview with Nicodemus, and in comparative youth it baffles and overpowers the grave, venerable, and wordly-wise senator of Jerusalem. We see it in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, in which he speaks of supplanting Judaism and establishing a

spiritual and universal religion, as a common and familiar thought.

There is an instance more striking, in which this consciousness of a world-wide mission flowed out almost in the form of a soliloquy. It was when certain Greeks desired to be introduced to him. We immediately imagine the association of ideas by which his subsequent language was suggested. It would naturally lead him to think *of the universality of his mission*, not yet fully disclosed to the world, but as certain to him as his own existence. These Greeks were, as it were, the first-fruits of an abundant harvest, the first drops of a copious shower.

But he could become a universal Messiah only by *dying*. As long as he lived, the Jews, even those who believed on him, would appropriate him to themselves, and imagine that he came to make Judaism universal. His death was to destroy that hope, and reveal the fact, that his kingdom was *spiritual*, and destined to *supersede*, and not to perpetuate, Judaism. He must die to the Jews, in order to extend his religion to the Gentiles.

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

That this consciousness of a divine mission, and of supernatural communication with God, was in him, and in a manner made a part of his being, we have not only the testimony of his express *declaration*, but the constant and consistent testimony of his whole *conduct*, after the commencement of his public ministry. He assumed at once, humble as he was in his outward appearance, to be the Founder of a new religion, commensurate with the human race, and as lasting as time. He laid down its essential doctrines, he showed wherein it was coincident with Judaism, which was the existing religion, and in what it differed. He declared what part of the old religion was retained, and what part was done away. He appointed the ritual of the new religion, and commenced its celebration. He appointed twelve Apostles to be the constant attendants of his ministry, to receive his doctrines, to imbibe his spirit and be the witnesses of his life and actions, and after his resurrection he commissioned them to spread his religion over the world. "Go," said he, "teach all nations, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." On this clear, calm, consistent, and unchanging *consciousness* of Jesus, revealed through all his words and actions, has been mainly based the faith of the Christian world in all ages. They have regarded him as *the faithful and true witness*, and, dying as he did in testimony to this claim, his death has been understood as a martyrdom to this great fact. His mission was sealed by his blood.

By placing this ground of faith at the head, I would not be understood to exclude or disparage

other grounds of belief. Christ himself did not. He gave his testimony, but he declared that his testimony was corroborated by his supernatural words and works. "It is written in your law," said he, "that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."

These different grounds of evidence remain to the present day, not unchanged in relative strength, but in substance essentially the same. The miracles were conclusive to them who saw them, but they come to us at second hand. As they are recorded in the Gospels by the Evangelists, they are *the testimony of a testimony.* The miraculousness of the words of Christ consists in their essential wisdom and spirituality. This is not only as manifest to our minds as to those who first listened to them, but more so. The mind of the world has made vast progress, intellectually, since that time. Science and experience have expanded it in every direction. Christianity has developed the moral and spiritual capacities of men, as they were never developed before. Neither man's intellectual nor spiritual advancement has gone beyond Christianity. They are still far behind it. But every step of their progress makes men more sensible how great and wise a thing Christianity is, how sublimely true are the words of Jesus, how necessary it is to suppose them to have come directly from the wisdom of the Omniscient Mind.

DISCOURSE V.

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

THEN SPAKE JESUS AGAIN UNTO THEM, SAYING, I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE. — John viii. 12.

If we may believe the history of the New Testament, Jesus was miraculously sent by God to set up a new religion upon the earth, which was to embrace the whole world and continue to the end of time. But in order to do this, it was necessary that he should possess *certain endowments.* He must possess *superhuman knowledge*, and must *know* that he possessed it, in order to have confidence in himself and in his enterprise. No human wisdom was competent to frame a religion for the world. Without conscious inspiration from above, he could not have assumed the position of *authority* which was necessary to the character of the promulgator of a new religion. The offices of prophet and philosopher are totally different. The philosopher promulgates truth upon the authority of *reason* and *argumentation.* He wins others to *coincide* with him in *opinion*

by argument. The prophet promulgates truth on the ground of *certainty*, and of course on the basis of an authority which commands, not only *assent*, but *obedience*. He who is sent by God *has a right*, and *feels* that he has a right, to *command*. The philosopher only *persuades*, and feels that he has only a *right* to persuade. One establishes a religion, the other a philosophical sect.

It may be objected, that the certainty from which Christ spoke was only a higher degree of *moral* conviction, which all men have in a degree. When he said, "There is one God," he uttered only the conviction which is inspired by the consentaneous phenomena of the universe; and when he said that this and that was God's will and law, he only gave utterance to the dictates of *conscience*, that universal moral nature which God has given to all men; when he said that God would reward the righteous and punish the wicked, he only said what *ought to be*, and, if God is just and omnipotent, *what will be;* and, of course, he only prophesied out of that moral and spiritual nature which is common to all men. In that case, he really *knew* no more than any one else; he had merely *stronger moral convictions* than the rest of mankind.

This ground cannot be taken without questioning his veracity and moral integrity. For he claims *immediate, conscious inspiration, direct communication* with God, and makes it the ground, not only of absolute certainty, but of *just authority* over mankind.

Not only was there necessary to his enterprise supernatural knowledge, and the consciousness of it, but some *supernatural seal* from God, confirming and

substantiating his assertion. This was indispensable for two reasons. It was necessary for the establishment of his claims to authority over mankind. It performed the same office to them that the voice from heaven did to his immediate followers: "This is my beloved Son: *hear ye him.*" Still more was it necessary to his success with the Jews. Without it, he could not have made a single convert. No Jew would ever have forsaken a religion founded on the evidence of miracle, for one sustained merely by philosophical argument and logical demonstration.

Accordingly, the Jews make this continual demand upon him, throughout his whole ministry. "A miracle, a miracle!" say they. "Give us a sign, a sign from heaven. We know that God spake unto Moses, but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is." Moses had shown them signs from heaven, that is to say, the giving of the Law was accompanied by thunder and smoke, and the sound of a trumpet, from the cloud on Sinai. Bread for their sustenance had apparently fallen from the celestial regions for forty years. A religion thus authenticated could not have been superseded by philosophical argument, nor by any revelation of spiritual truth, however clear and demonstrative, unaccompanied by miraculous testimony. Accordingly, this was the first instrument of his success, *before* the excellence of his teaching was developed. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, *Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou?* Thou shalt see greater

things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

It is an historical fact, then, if the New Testament is to be relied on, that Jesus, immediately after his baptism, *assumed the position of a prophet;* that is, he claimed supernatural knowledge, a knowledge communicated to him immediately from God. We have seen that he did so in the case of Nathaniel, and the fact was recognized by Nathaniel himself. This knowledge related to a contemporaneous event. In his conversation with Nicodemus, he claimed *supernatural knowledge of another kind;* that the religion which God was about to set up was to be a new and distinct religion, not a branch or modification of Judaism. All must be *born again*, the Jew as well as the heathen, in order to enter into the kingdom of God. This knowledge comes from God. It is not an *uncertain opinion*, it is a *certain truth.* It is a thing to which he testifies as a thing *known*, not as a mere probability, as a thing *believed.* "Verily, verily, I say unto you, we speak that we do *know*, and testify that we *have seen*, and ye receive not our witness." This knowledge is confined to himself alone. "*No* man hath ascended up to heaven, *but* he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." Heaven is the habitation of God, and as those who know the counsels of kings gain access to them by approaching the court where they reside, so, by a figure of speech, *to know the Divine counsels is to be in heaven.* He goes on to disclose a secret of the Divine purpose, known to none at that moment but the Omniscient Mind, *the cruci-*

fixion of the Messiah. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

This supernatural knowledge of Jesus was one of the main instruments of fixing the faith of his contemporaries. It produced a strong demonstration in his favor among the Samaritans. The woman who came to the well of Jacob is immediately arrested and convinced by it. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband. For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*"

That Jesus was *conscious* of possessing supernatural knowledge, communicated to him immediately by God, we can have no higher evidence than that he recognizes the fact in acts of solemn prayer to God. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and *hast revealed them* unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. *All things are delivered unto me* of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." We cannot conceive of any sincere, not to say sane, man, making use of such language as this, in solemn prayer to God, without a *consciousness* of supernatural communication from him. To the same effect are the words of his last prayer with his disci-

ples: "For I have given unto them the words *which thou gavest me;* and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

His knowledge of God was not derived from philosophical speculation, but from immediate inspiration. That knowledge was to be to his disciples the source or cause of eternal life. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

To the reception or rejection of those doctrines which he promulgated on the ground of his supernatural knowledge, he attached the most momentous consequences. "He that keepeth my word shall never see death." "I am the bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." Could he have made such claims had he not been *conscious* of communicating to the world doctrines which he had derived immediately from God?

Christ claimed the possession of supernatural powers, the power of working miracles, and alleged them as proofs of his mission from God. It is difficult to conceive how he could have proceeded on his mission with confidence without them. They authenticated himself to himself. How otherwise could he distinguish the suggestions of the Spirit, which was given him without measure, from the motions of his own mind? The inward mission must be corroborated by outward sign, before he could assume the respon-

sible position of the founder of a new divine dispensation to mankind. The inauguration in the Jordan seems to be the first event of that kind which *fixed* the conviction in his own mind, that he was that great prophet which was to come into the world. For immediately afterward new temptations seem to be suggested, natural to the consciousness of standing in a new position, and receiving new and untried powers. Human passions and appetites were presented with new instruments, and tempted with new opportunities. "*If thou be the Son of God*," if thou art the Messiah, and possessest miraculous powers, use them for the supply of thy wants and the gratification of thine appetites, "command these stones to be made bread." If thou possessest miraculous powers, use them for the gratification of ambition: become a temporal sovereign, and reign over all the kingdoms of the earth. Or of thy vanity, and cast thyself from the pinnacle of the temple, in the presence of a multitude, to excite their admiration and astonishment.

But for none of these purposes did he use them, or attempt to use them. He made them always the seals of his mission. Before the raising of Lazarus, the most stupendous of all his miracles, he prayed aloud: "Father, I thank thee, that *thou hast heard me.* And I know that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, *that they may believe* that thou didst send me." This single instance is a key to the bearing of all his miracles, and the use which he made of them to authenticate his mission.

On another occasion he said: "But I have greater

witness than that of John, for *the works which the Father hath given me to finish*, the same works that I do bear witness of me, *that the Father hath sent me*." On another occasion he said: "It is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." Again: "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." Again: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not, but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me."

Such were the frequent, explicit, and unequivocal appeals of Jesus to his miracles as the evidence of his mission from God. They were made at the time, and in the presence of those who were the witnesses of them. They were considered by his contemporaries, who believed on him, as having that bearing. Nicodemus, a Rabbi of ripe judgment, of mature age and high intellectual culture, came to him and said: "Rabbi, we know that thou art *a teacher come from God;* for *no man can do these miracles that thou doest*, except God be with him." Such was the reasoning of the man born blind, whose eyes Jesus had opened. "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know *that God heareth not sinners;* but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. *If this man were not of God*, he could do nothing."

The force of Christ's miracles was attempted to be

evaded by his enemies, on the ground that they were testimony to his divine mission, which, if not rebutted, left them without excuse in their unbelief. "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, *Is not this the Son of David?*" Is not this the Messiah? "But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, *This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.* And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? ..... But if I cast out devils *by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*"

This testimony of miracles to the mission of Jesus is the basis of the whole structure of the Gospel according to John. John states the purpose of his Gospel in the following verses: "And many *other signs* truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; *but these are written that ye might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."

The word in this passage rendered "sign" means a mark or token, an evidence, a signature, a voucher. As applied to the miracles of Christ, it means the *divine signature* to his mission. Accordingly, if we carefully examine the structure of the fourth Gospel,

we shall find that it is *a selection of the most remarkable of Christ's miracles*, those which conveyed the strongest proof to the immediate spectators that Jesus was the expected Messiah. First, the supernatural knowledge he exhibited of the character and history of Nathaniel; then his miraculous penetration into the purposes and thoughts of Nicodemus; then his detailed development of the condition and previous life of the woman of Samaria; then the feeding of the multitude in the desert; then the raising of Lazarus; then the cure of the blind man, which was legally investigated; then of the lame man, who had been a cripple eight-and-thirty years; and finally his resurrection and repeated appearances to his disciples, and his submitting himself to the test of their senses; — all these constitute a mass of miraculous events, which, if admitted as historical facts, leave no doubt of the divine mission of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus claimed to possess superhuman wisdom. There is a difference between superhuman *wisdom* and supernatural *knowledge*. The knowledge of future events, of the thoughts of others, of things distant and unseen, is one thing, and the knowledge of *truth*, of *human nature*, *human relations*, *duties*, *and responsibilities*, is another. They do not necessarily involve each other. The prophets of old possessed a knowledge often of the future and unseen, but, with the exception of Moses, none of them possessed the wisdom which was necessary to the construction of a religion. That wisdom Jesus possessed, and we have the proof of it in his religion itself, which has borne the test of time and of human scrutiny for more than eighteen hundred years.

This supernatural endowment is less palpable than the other, because it lies in the direct line of human faculties, while the other does not. It becomes demonstrably miraculous only when so far transcending all human attainment as to leave all human competition altogether behind. The power which made the blind to see, and the lame to walk, was a matter of the *senses*. The wisdom which spoke out in the Sermon on the Mount was a matter of the *judgment*, though equally miraculous and equally transcending all human unaided faculties and endowments.

This of all the arguments for the divine mission of Jesus has been the most convincing to some of the greatest minds, and the most gifted of American statesmen and jurists has left it inscribed upon his tombstone, as we have already said, that this, above all others, carried conviction to his mind that Christianity was of heavenly origin.

This wisdom Christ manifested from the commencement of his ministry. Whenever he opened his mouth, it flowed forth as if from an inexhaustible fountain. Here Christ comes in contrast with the wisest of the heathen philosophers, and he as far transcends them all as the meridian sun the twinkling stars of night. The wisest of them uttered a few wise sayings among a mass of errors and crudities and follies. Every part of Christ's discourses surpasses the wisest things that the most eminent of them ever uttered. God is revealed and brought near, the human heart is searched to its utmost recesses, all the relations of life laid open, and the duties which grow out of them made clear as the

light of day, so that no man can resist the conviction of duty which they carry home to his conscience.

Christ not only possessed this superhuman wisdom, this supernatural knowledge of truth, but *he was conscious of it*, and spoke of it as *the sceptre by which he was to rule the world.* Pilate says to him, "Art thou a king, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. *Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

The authority of which Christ here speaks is not external, but internal; not the authority of outward miracle, but of *inward conviction;* — the coincidence between the outward word and the law written on the heart of every human being. The existence of that law, of that moral nature which God has given us, and the assent which the heart gives to the words of Christ, do not at all diminish the miraculousness of the words of Christ. Its existence is necessary to the religious and responsible nature of man. But no unassisted mind has ever given that law a full development and perfect expression with the exception of Christ, and this has been acknowledged by believer and unbeliever from that time to this. This was the reason why his hearers confessed that "never man spake like this man." It was his confidence in the perfection and power of this word which led Jesus to say: "I am the bread of life, I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the *words* that I speak

unto you, *they are spirit and they are life.*" It was this confidence which led him to say to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Conscious of these endowments, and possessing these powers, Jesus claimed authority to set up a new religion in the world. There was a religion of miraculous origin and of divine authority already in existence. This, without scruple or hesitation, he proceeded to modify, or set aside. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." This is expressly the law of Moses. "But *I* say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

He omitted from his religion the ceremonies of the law, and gave the reason why he did so, that those ceremonies were unsuited to its nature. When he was asked why he did not enjoin fasting upon his disciples, he answered: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine in new bottles, and both are preserved."

He claimed authority to promulgate a new law concerning *divorce*. Moses had permitted it for the hardness of the people's hearts, on account of the

cruelty which a wife might suffer, if she were bound indissolubly to a brutal husband. But now that the barbarism of that age was past, Christ restricted the license of divorce to a single cause.

Aware that his kingdom was to be spiritual, and his dominion that of the truth, he proceeded to organize it accordingly. He chose twelve disciples, whom he denominated Apostles, to be his constant companions, to listen to his discourses, and to be transformed into his moral image, that, when he should be removed from the earth, they might take up the work where he laid it down, and perpetuate his religion to the remotest times.

In making them his Apostles and ministers, he explicitly told them that they had nothing earthly to expect from their connection with him, or their labors in his cause. "Whosoever cometh after me," said he, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight."

Before his ascension, he formally commissioned his disciples to spread his religion over the world. "Go," said he, "and teach all nations." "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature." He prescribed and limited the *rites* of his new religion, Baptism and the Supper. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "This do," said he of the Supper, "in remembrance of me." "Thus," says Paul, "do ye show forth the Lord's death until he come." His relation to his followers was not to cease when he left the world.

His name was to be associated with that of God in the form of baptism, and that formula was for ever to claim for him the divine authority by which he professed to act while here on earth.

Thus was the ministry of Christ a perfect whole, its plan from the first comprehended and declared, its purpose announced, its progress and termination foreshown, and the fate and progress of his religion in after ages predicted. It is not the shapeless and casual production of accident, which unforeseen events moulded into form and symmetry, and concurring minds helped to develop. It was perfect at first in the mind of its Founder, and went forth, not to be the sport of chance, but to shape the course of events, and create the world anew.

Christ claimed to have a connection with his disciples, which was not to cease when he was removed from the earth. Just before his ascension, he promised: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The precise sense in which this is to be interpreted, perhaps, we do not know, but we have very remarkable facts which answer to this promise. We have the miraculous events which helped the Apostles to establish his religion in the earth. We have the frequent personal appearance of Christ to Paul, and those supernatural interpositions which informed the Church that Christianity was to be extended to the Gentiles. We have the preservation of the Christian Church through ages of ignorance, barbarism, and violence, when every other institution was wrecked and obliterated from the face of the earth. The Church survives, and is more powerful, extensive, and vigorous than ever. Such

a preservation certainly argues an especial and continual interposition of Providence. Whether this is *all* that is meant by Christ, we perhaps have no means of determining.

Finally, *Jesus claimed a relation to his followers which was to be renewed in another life.* He was to recognize them as having been his disciples, in the presence of that God who sent him to teach and save mankind. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. And whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." He represents himself likewise as judging the nations. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats."

But the boldness of Oriental figure and of prophetic representation permits us to interpret all this, not of Christ's *person*, but of his *doctrines*. "If any man hear my words and believe not, *I judge him not*, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: *the word that I have spoken*, the same shall judge him at the last day." How far he is personally concerned in this may be inferred from his language in relation to Moses. "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is *one that accuseth you*, even Moses, in whom ye trust."

This would indicate, that those who enjoy the light

of the Gospel are not to be judged *personally* by Christ, but by *the principles of his religion;* or, in other words, all men must be judged by the light of that religion which they possess; and nothing can be more just, and nothing more true. But, in saying this, Christ makes the highest possible claim of divine authority. He makes his doctrine nothing less than the word of God, and the law of the universe.

DISCOURSE VI.

CHRIST WITHOUT SIN.

WHO DID NO SIN, NEITHER WAS GUILE FOUND IN HIS MOUTH. — 1 Peter ii. 22.

If we may believe the Apostles and Evangelists, there appeared in Judæa, somewhat more than eighteen centuries ago, a moral prodigy, — a man, or at least one in human form, and born of woman, who never sinned, who was absolutely perfect, was never chargeable with error in judgment or delinquency in action, never failed to do anything that he ought to do, or did anything that was wrong, was subjected to all the trials which are incident to our common humanity, besides many and great temptations which were peculiar to himself, and yet never did amiss, — in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin."

That such was the fact we have the testimony of both friends and enemies. I have just read you that of Peter, and he was one of the three most intimate and most trusted of his disciples. The charges preferred against him at his trial were of the most frivo-

lous character, and Pilate, his judge, acquitted him from all guilt, and said, "I find no fault in him."

We arrive at the same conclusion concerning him in several ways. We have the direct testimony of his companions expressly to the point, we have the general portrait of his character as exhibited in his daily life, in what he did, in what he said, in what he forbore to do and say, and in what he suffered. When these things are exhibited to us in the simple, ingenuous, and artless narrative of the Evangelists, we are able to judge for ourselves, and form an idea of his character almost as if we had been present. We have another source of evidence in the impression he made on those about him. We judge of the dimensions and figure of an object, not only by looking directly at it, but by observing the shadow which it casts. We do not read far in the Gospels, before we perceive with what *profound veneration* Jesus was regarded by his disciples. This, of course, was the natural effect of what he really was. Wherever he went, a moral majesty surrounded him, which cast a spell of awe on friend and foe. And when we see him presiding at the last supper, and in prospect of an immediate and painful death, instead of *receiving* strength and encouragement from his disciples, rising above the horrors of that sombre hour, and *consoling* and *strengthening* his disciples, our souls are bowed before his exalted dignity, and we acknowledge the towering grandeur of his character. That dignity, that calmness, that self-possession, were not assumed, strained, or artificial. They were *in* him and *of* him. They were a part of his permanent self, and when the hour of trial came, the

wrong of his unjust condemnation, his brutal scourging, and his painful death upon the cross, he went through it all with the sublimest fortitude and the divinest patience! He drank the bitter cup without a murmuring word.

The impression left upon the mind, after a perusal of the Gospels, is, that Jesus formed a class in the moral world by himself. He ascended to a higher sphere than had ever been reached by any who had appeared in human form. To all others whom our hearts reverence, we apply the terms *goodness*, *virtue*, *piety*. To Jesus alone beside the Almighty, we apply the term *holiness*. All the saints of old were imperfect. We cannot conceive of their entering heaven by any other gate than that of *repentance*. Jesus could enter it through the golden portal of *innocence*.

But the holiness of God and the holiness of Jesus we conceive of as specifically different. The holiness of God is *necessary*, for God cannot be tempted. It is inherent, constitutional, immutable. The holiness of Christ was *voluntary*, the result of *choice*, the habitual preference of good, when evil was equally presented and freely rejected. The holiness of God is the spontaneous action of infinite wisdom and infinite goodness. The holiness of Christ was the conformity of his will to the perfect will of God. "Let this cup pass from me," said he in an hour of human dread of pain and death; "but not as I will," he added, as his soul assumed the attitude of perfect allegiance, — "*not as I will, but as thou wilt.*"

Again, the happiness of God is inherent, underived, and indestructible, that of Christ was *derivative* and

probationary. "It was for the joy that was *set before him*, that he endured the cross, despising the shame." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as *I also overcame*, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

I begin with Christ's *piety.* This was perfect. His communion with God was constant, uninterrupted, full, serene, and unclouded. The piety of the most perfect of the sons of men has never arrived at this height. It is the nature of disobedience and distrust, to beget *coldness*, *fear*, and *estrangement.* Where is there a human being, who has not at times waxed weary in well-doing? Who is there that has not been appalled by the mysteries and perplexities of this life, the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, and thus, for a season, lost faith in God and goodness; and has then found the prayer of trust and resignation utterly impossible? or, if he still continues to use the language of devotion, does he not find the words of his lips going far before the convictions of his mind and the emotions of his heart?

Who has not suffered from the estrangement of disobedience? The intercourse of a disobedient child with the best of fathers can never be perfectly cordial and happy. Nay, the *disobedient* child shrinks away from the presence of his father. The relation between them is vitiated and poisoned by conscious disobedience. And hence the lamentable failure in devotion of the world at large. *They do not live up to the point of spontaneous and pleasurable communion with God.* They shrink from prayer *as inconsistent with the tenor of their daily life.* And with the best

of men, those hours in which full and delightful communion with God is possible are few and far between. With Christ that full communion with God was *constant, habitual, spontaneous, uninterrupted.* That estrangement which is the *prevailing* habit of the world was never known to him.

In this habitual piety, Jesus lived and moved and had his being. It constituted as it were an atmosphere about him. His immediate disciples felt its influence, and they looked upon him with mingled sentiments of reverence and awe. It transfigured him before them, so that in a moral sense "his countenance shone as the light, and his raiment was white and glistering, and they felt it good for them to be there." That presence transformed them into new men, and breathed into them a new spirit, and they went forth and communicated to the world what they had received from him, so that the life of Christ constituted a new era upon earth; it was the birth of a new spiritual force, which went forth to regenerate mankind.

We cannot read the narratives of the Evangelists without being struck with the spotless *integrity* which was everywhere exhibited in the words and in the deeds of the Saviour. If anything can be learned from the accounts of the temptation, new trials and responsibilities awaited him in consequence of his *official* character, superadded to those which are incident to our common nature. He was to be exalted to a dignity unapproached by any of our race, to be God's vicegerent on earth, to legislate for nations and ages; he was to command the elements, and raise the dead; and yet he was to assume

none of the outward dignity which would correspond to such an exaltation. Such an external pomp and magnificence would have removed him from the sympathy and affection of those whom he came to seek, to elevate, to sanctify and save. It would have weakened, instead of aiding, that purely spiritual power which he came to exert. His mission was not to seek his own glory, but "to bind up the broken-hearted, to preach the Gospel to the poor." And therefore it was, that, entering fully into the spirit of his mission, he everywhere forgot himself; he had compassion on the multitude, who wandered like sheep without a shepherd; he taught them till he neglected to take his necessary food, and his friends interposed to save him, as they thought, from total self-destruction. At the well of Samaria he felt weariness, and his disciples went away to buy food. But when the highways were filled with Samaritans hastening to listen to his teaching, the desire of food had departed. He has meat to eat that men know not of. "His meat is to do the will of his Heavenly Father, and to finish his work." This devoted humility seems to have been precisely the trait which was in the mind of the Apostle when he wrote. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than himself. Look not every one on his own things, but likewise at the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought not a likeness to God a thing eagerly to be grasped at, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being in the likeness of man,

and formed in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

With his disciples, he dealt with the most absolute candor. He made them fully aware, from the first, of the nature and consequences of their connection with him. He told them that he called them to a life of self-sacrifice. "He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." And when two of them came to ask to sit on his right hand and his left, he asked them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" referring, not to the glories they must share, but to the sufferings they were to undergo. Thus was fidelity stamped upon every act of his life.

Next in the order of the virtues to piety and integrity comes *benevolence*. Next to the love of God comes the love of our neighbor. Benevolence is not *sensibility*, though it includes it. Sensibility is sometimes a passive emotion, and is purely constitutional; and it not unfrequently relieves distress merely to relieve itself. It is apt, too, to be capricious and transitory. Benevolence is something broader and deeper, more systematic and enduring. It is intellectual and moral, as well as emotional. It is based on principle as well as feeling. It influences every act, and controls the whole plan of life. It is calm, far-seeing, self-possessed, and untiring. It is impossible to define benevolence so well as in the words of the Apostle. "It suffereth long and is kind; it envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed

up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth." It is scarcely necessary to say, that this is a perfect portrait of but one person who ever bore the form of humanity, and we can scarcely imagine that the Apostle had not his Master in his mind when he wrote down the characteristics of true benevolence.

His character shone out in his tenderness towards his disciples. They were ignorant, weak, and erring. They often tried his patience to the utmost. They mistook his purposes, and misunderstood his character. But nothing could wean his love. They disputed among themselves for rank and precedence. He rebuked their ambition by setting before them a little child. During his agony in the garden, they fell asleep. In the extremity of his anguish, he uses no bitter reproaches, but only says, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" Peter denied him with an oath. At their first interview after the resurrection, he dwells not on the sad apostasy, but merely says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" The pains of crucifixion kindle no resentment. He curses not his enemies, but he fulfils his own precept. He *prays* for his betrayers and murderers, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!"

In expatiating upon the benevolence of Jesus, it has been customary, as it seems to me, to overlook or underrate another feature of his character no less glorious and no less conspicuous, *his magnanimity*, his

energy, his strength of will, his decision of character, his promptness to encounter violence and face the terrors of death. This want of appreciation arises from the fact, that active resistance to his persecutors was forbidden him by the nature of his office. He was "not to strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." He was to conquer the world, not by the sword, but by the might of a love that was stronger than death. He was to be "a martyr to the truth," "to draw all men unto him," and reign in all hearts, by *enduring* the agonies of the cross.

It may be said that there was a moment when nature was overborne by the prospect of the unknown torments of crucifixion, that "he began to be sore amazed and very heavy," and he confessed that "his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." But this scene, when rightly viewed, *enhances* instead of diminishing the magnanimity of his final triumph; for it shows that the self-command which he finally exhibited was *moral*, the result of will, and not of a nature inaccessible to the dread of pain and death. It was *spiritual strength* victorious over earthly infirmity. And the way in which it was attained is a lesson to Christian piety throughout all ages. *It was by prayer.* "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And he rose up from that prayer calm, resolved, self-possessed, undaunted; for when the ruffian band arrived he went forth to meet them, and voluntarily surrendered himself into their hands.

Such were some, though but few, of the characteristics of Jesus. The life of such a person itself constitutes an era in the history of mankind. It was no less wonderful than his miracles and his precepts, and made an impression upon the world no less profound. It was a corner-stone of the Christian Church. It helped to lay a foundation broad and large for that august structure, which is to gather within its ample walls every nation and kindred and tongue and people, and stand for ever. It was a tower of strength to the cause of the Apostles. It struck the world with moral conviction; and it lay level with the most ordinary understanding. Such a character, portrayed as an actual fact, as a living reality, rose far above all previous conceptions of attainable excellence. All the world bowed down before it, for every one confessed to himself how utterly impotent would have been his own mightiest endeavors to approach a perfection so spotless. Thus it was that Jesus, exalted to the throne of spiritual power, went forth to judge and rule the nations.

The *miracles*, the *precepts*, and the *character* of Christ, and the power of them all to regenerate man, — these were the four pillars of the Christian cause. It was so at first, and it is so now. The character of Christ, his sinless perfection, may be said, perhaps, to be the most appreciable argument for the Christian faith. Its exalted excellence renders it wholly impossible to associate with him the idea of enthusiasm or imposture. He who was wiser than the wisest of our race could not have been deceived concerning himself; and he whose whole soul was

simplicity and candor, could not have deceived us when he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Hence the significancy of the Communion. It brings up before the Church, in all ages, the person and the character of Christ, one of the seals of divinity which is stamped upon his mission, making it to Christian faith a living, practical reality. Not only his life, but his bloody sacrifice, was a seal of its truth, and every Christian who receives strength from it to walk in the steps of Jesus feels, that to him, at least, his Gospel is the bread of life which came down from heaven, for it giveth life to the world.

They will recollect with gratitude that the Saviour himself was fully aware of the vital power of his perfect life when he said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

DISCOURSE VII.

FAITH OF THE APOSTLES.

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF AN ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON WITH HIS FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH. — John i. 14.

A CARDINAL point in the evidences of Christianity is the historical fact of *the full, firm, and enduring faith of Christ's Apostles.* If the New Testament is at all to be relied on as history, nothing can be more certain than that the disciples, his intimate and daily companions, had not been long in his society before they became *fully convinced of his divine mission and authority*, and their respect for him deepened into veneration. The perfection of his character, the profundity of his wisdom, the impressiveness of his miracles, and the intimacy of his apparent communion with God, made them feel in his presence a species of *awe*, which speaks out at every turn. It increased during his ministry, and was most distinctly manifested at the last supper. It received only a partial and temporary shock at his crucifixion, and broke forth anew, and rose to a higher elevation, after his resurrection and ascension.

Not only so, we see this faith manifested by the different Apostles in a different manner, according to the temperament, natural endowment, and circumstances of each. Nathaniel, at the commencement of Christ's ministry,—a plain, unsophisticated Israelite, who expected the Messiah simply as a national deliverer,—when Jesus gave him proof of supernatural and prophetic knowledge, exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art *the King of Israel.*" Peter, after many and more striking evidences of a divine mission, declared, "*Thou art the Christ*, the Son of the living God." But Peter afterwards denied him, and perhaps, with the other disciples, lost all faith in him at his crucifixion. Yet, after the resurrection and ascension of his Master, he was the boldest of them all. As one of the witnesses of these decisive events, he confronted his whole nation, and told the rulers to their face, that they had been the betrayers and murderers of the true Messiah.

But Peter proved his faith, not only by his words, but by his *deeds*. He spent his life in preaching Jesus as the true Messiah, first to the Jews, probably without a full comprehension of the extent of his mission, and after the vision at Joppa, to both Jews and Gentiles, as the great spiritual Teacher of the world, and the pledge of immortality to all mankind. The Jewish fisherman, ignorant, narrow, rash, and unstable, is in the course of years transformed into the Christian sage, saint, and martyr, calm, wise, deliberate, self-possessed, and immovable. In old age, after having passed through every possible trial of his faith, he writes a clear and undoubting

declaration of his faith: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Nothing can exceed the calm confidence here expressed in the resurrection of Christ, the cardinal miracle of the Christian religion, and in that immortality which was assured by it. And then, if we are to receive the Second Epistle as Peter's, and the critical objections to it are, in my judgment, very slight, we have another most explicit declaration of faith. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

In the Epistle of James, we see the same firm and confident faith. But his Christianity and his faith in Christ are of a different type, as became the peculiarities of his temperament and circumstances. He was a Jerusalem Jew, though converted to Christianity, and it is probable that he continued to conform himself to the law of Moses, as well as the Gospel, as long as he lived. Confined, as it would

seem, to Jerusalem all his days, and mingling the law of Moses with the Gospel, without the dialectic learning of Paul, or the poetic and creative genius of John, he seems to have regarded the new dispensation as merely supplementary to the old, and Christianity itself as only a more stringent and spiritual law. There is nothing in him of the high ideality which led John to personify the Word; nor of that broad conception of Christianity, which led the Apostle of the Gentiles to speak of Jesus everywhere as the world-redeeming Messiah. To him, the Calvinistic abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith was in the highest degree offensive. In one thing, however, he coincides with his fellow-Apostles, *in a firm and undoubting faith*, maintained in the face of a persecuting world. It was a sufficient expression of his faith, that he was willing to forsake his countrymen, and preside over the Christian Church in the midst of the betrayers and murderers of his Master. His Epistle, short as it is, is his testimony to all succeeding ages, and leaves his faith to be accounted for by those who suppose that Christianity was first founded on some grand deception or mistake.

I return to the Apostle John. In him we see, in my judgment, not only the strongest marks of a personal faith, but of a faith having passed through the stage of mere belief, and arrived at the higher one of *sentiment and affection*. We do not readily give our affections, until our full confidence is won. As long as any doubt remains, there is a fear of the disappointment and mortification that always follow the consciousness of having been deceived, which forbids intimacy, and chills the current of

affection. In the case of John, there is ample proof that there was left in his mind *no doubt* of the perfect integrity of his Master.

His opportunities of full and accurate knowledge were ample and satisfactory. He had been a disciple of John the Baptist, and was with Jesus from the very commencement of his ministry. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and on whose bosom he leaned, or, in modern phrase, was his most intimate companion. He was one of the three who were permitted by Jesus to behold the transfiguration. He was one of the two who ran to the sepulchre, on the morning of the resurrection, and ascertained, by personal inspection, that the body of Jesus was not there. To his care the mother of Jesus was intrusted by his latest breath. From her he must have learned, during the remainder of her life, everything in the history of her son which could either confirm or shake his faith.

It is the tradition of the Church, and his Gospel bears the evidence, that it was written *long after* the others. The experiences of a long ministry must have either corroborated or unsettled his faith. Jesus, during his life on earth, had made large promises of divine aid to his Apostles, when he should have left the world; in the first place, *to give them assurance that he was still in being*, in the second, *to give them guidance and direction* as to what they were to do in his cause, and in the third place, to confer upon them *those miraculous powers* which were necessary to confirm their faith in their Master's mission, and the reality of their own. *He must have known* whether those promises were ever fulfilled.

If they were *not* fulfilled, it is impossible to conceive that his confidence in his Master could have been maintained, or that he and his fellow-disciples could have gone forward to act in his cause.

Yet he *did* persevere. The whole course of his life was changed by his faith in Jesus of Nazareth. His youth was passed as a fisherman on the Lake of Galilee. His middle life and old age, in foreign lands, in a pursuit as diverse from his early occupation as can possibly be conceived,—as a teacher and an apostle of a spiritual and universal religion.

He had not been entrapped and led into such a course of life by any specious and deceitful promises. There were no prospects of power, or wealth, or honor held out to him, to induce him to abandon a certainty for an uncertainty. When he left all to follow Jesus, he was not induced to embrace his new course of life with the delusive prospect of bettering his worldly condition; but he was told, on the contrary, at the outset, that he had nothing to expect, from his connection with Jesus, but enmity and persecution. "Let him that cometh after me *deny himself*, and *take up his cross* and follow me." There was nothing left, then, but an *unwavering faith* in his Master, which could have operated to induce John to adhere to the cause of Jesus, to the utter neglect and forfeiture of every worldly interest.

We have *his life*, then, as the testimony of his faith, the strongest that could possibly have been given. We have, moreover, the testimony of *his Gospel*, which is the spoken testimony of his heart and mind. It is deliberate, cool, and careful, written after the experience and reflection of a long life.

It is, as I have already said, the tradition of the early Church, that the Gospel of John was written long after the others, and at a distance from the Holy Land. Everything about this Gospel corresponds with this supposition. The circumstances of the Church had wholly changed. The Gospel at first was preached exclusively to the Jews. It was necessary to their faith, that Jesus should have sprung from the families of Abraham and David. Hence the genealogies, and the early, personal history of Jesus.

When John wrote his Gospel, Christianity was already established, foreigners had been converted to it, and had begun to corrupt its doctrines by an admixture of the Oriental philosophies. The humanity of Christ was denied. The authority of the Old Testament was disputed. The Jehovah of the ancient dispensation was degraded into an inferior and subordinate Deity.

To guard against the errors of the time, as well as strengthen the true faith of the Church, seems to have been the purpose which John had in view in writing his Gospel. He begins, therefore, with the origin, not of the *person* of Christ, but the origin of his *Gospel.* It is the Word of God. It comes from the very centre of the Divine Essence. It is one of a series of revelations running back to the very beginning of all created things. God made himself known in the creation of the visible universe, when "he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast";—in the creation of the human soul, which is his brightest image that is seen below, since it is God's inspiration which giveth man understand-

ing, and lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. He made himself especially known to his ancient church. His word was spoken by the prophets, "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

But in Jesus this Divine manifestation, this outspeaking of the Divinity, shone out with an especial lustre, and became still more distinct and articulate. It dwelt in him, as it were in a tent. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, *tabernacled*, among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only son with his father," as the text literally reads. The man Jesus, body and soul, became merely the medium, or instrument, of Divine manifestation.

What that glory was with which Jesus was invested in the eyes of his disciples appears as we advance in the narrative. It was his *superhuman power* and his *supernatural knowledge*. This is shown in the account of the first miracle of changing the water into wine, at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and *manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.*"

Now, whatever difficulties there may be in the verbal interpretation of John's Gospel, there can be no doubt that it was written *from the highest point of faith*, that is of belief in *the supernatural* in Christ. Indeed, this is the very key of the structure of the whole Gospel. It is a narrative, as we have seen, of some of the most remarkable manifestations of the supernatural in Jesus, both in words and works. This is the declared purpose for which it was written. After relating the appearance of Jesus to his disciples

subsequent to his resurrection, in which the doubts of Thomas were removed by touching his body and feeling his wounds, the writer adds: "And many *other signs* truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." Now the specific meaning of the word rendered "*sign*" here is a miraculous manifestation of divine power, intended to authenticate some prophet or divine messenger, and to assure the world that he comes from that God who alone has power to disturb the structure or change the order of nature.

Review the whole Gospel, and you will find that this sentence is an explanation of its whole plan. *It is*, as I have before remarked, *a selection from the principal miracles of Christ, which were most calculated to arrest the attention and fix the faith of those who witnessed them.* The first is his supernatural knowledge of the character and recent history of Nathaniel, by which he was converted to belief in Jesus as the Messiah. The next is the miracle of changing the water into wine, at the marriage feast in Cana. Then follows the exhibition of a miraculous knowledge of the character, thoughts, and purposes of Nicodemus, by which that cautious statesman was baffled and overpowered. Next comes the interview with the woman of Samaria, at the well of Jacob, in which, by the minuteness of his acquaintance with her present circumstances and former life, he convinced her that he was the Messiah. The next in order is the cure of the lame man at the pool

of Bethesda, who had been a notorious cripple for eight and thirty years. This was done on the Sabbath, and was followed by a legal investigation. To prove the breach of the Sabbath, of which Jesus was accused, it was necessary to admit and establish the miraculous cure. The narrator then passes on to the feeding of five thousand men in a desert place, with the five loaves and two small fishes. The miracle so much resembled the feeding of Israelites in the wilderness by Moses with manna from heaven, that a temporary enthusiasm was created, and the multitude were ready to take him by force and make him a king. Then follows what is intended to be an exhibition of miraculous knowledge of the secret character and history of the accusers of the woman taken in adultery, by which they were all, to a man, convicted by their own consciences, and put to flight.

One of the most public and well authenticated of Christ's miracles was giving sight to the man born blind. This is related minutely, and dwelt on at length. The impression is recorded, which was made upon the spectators, that Jesus was sent of God.

Greatest of all the divine attestations of the divine mission of Jesus, except his own resurrection, was the raising of Lazarus. This is narrated with the greatest particularity. The conduct and sentiments of the persons introduced are all in admirable keeping, and bear all the marks and features of historic truth. It was the turning-point of the fate of Jesus, and raised such a tempest of persecution against him, that it terminated in his death.

The Gospel of John is most full in relating the

different appearances of Christ after his resurrection, which were all, of course, supernatural. The tale is told with the particularity of an eyewitness, and is brought to bear on the great and fundamental article of the Christian faith, the Messiahship of Jesus, and his divine authority as the Sent of God.

Coincident with the Gospel of John, in its whole tone and complexion, is his First Epistle. It is an independent document, apparently drawn up in his extreme old age, bearing the same firm and unwavering testimony to the supernatural in Jesus. The first two verses are a recitation, and, in fact, a key, to the introduction to his Gospel, otherwise somewhat obscure in its peculiar phraseology. That which was divine and superhuman in Jesus, that which came from God and from heaven, and was called "the Word" in the Gospel, is in the Epistle called "the Word of Life," and in the second verse "Eternal Life," thus neutralizing the conception of the *personality of the Word*, which has so extensively prevailed in the Christian Church. That which the Gospel represents as masculine, the Epistle expresses by words which are feminine and neuter. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life. For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

Not only does he cherish this faith himself, but he makes it the instrument of salvation, the main fountain of the Christian life. "And we have seen, and

do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." To the same effect, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

I now come to Paul. There are historical facts connected with him of vital importance to the faith of the Christian world. There is no person in all antiquity whose real existence is more certain to us. We have a sketch of his life in the Acts, and we have his correspondence in his Epistles. The coincidence between the two is so accurate and so minute, and at the same time so apparently undesigned, that it leaves us in no doubt, that he who lived the life was the author of the writings.

We have observed, that the view taken of Jesus by the other Apostles had in each case something peculiar, personal, and appropriate; and therefore the personal peculiarities of each, appearing in their writings, constitute a distinct feature of truth and probability. This is eminently the case with the writings of Paul.

The history informs us, *that he had never known Jesus in the flesh.* He was known to him only as a spirit in the spiritual world. Not only as a spirit, but as a powerful agent, watching over and promoting the interests of the Christian Church. He himself was converted from a violent persecutor of the Christians to a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, by a personal appearance of the Crucified, with an overwhelming manifestation of supernatural power,—the flashing at noonday of a light from heaven so bright as to cause him to fall prostrate to the earth,

and to deprive him of his sight for a season. In the midst of this manifestation of supernatural power, a voice comes to him from Christ himself, expostulating with him for his cruelty. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The consequence is, that Paul is converted. He is informed in Damascus, by Ananias, that God had chosen him as an apostle of the new faith. "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard."

After this, in a trance, while he prayed in the temple at Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to him a second time, and expressly sent him on a mission to the Gentiles. We must likewise, I believe, regard as an interview with Jesus the vision at Corinth, which is narrated in the eighteenth chapter of Acts. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city."

After such peculiar experience, such spiritual intercourse with the Saviour, not, like that of the other Apostles, here in the flesh, and at a period now receding to a distance, we find him speaking of him in a manner as peculiar as his experience. In the commencement of his Epistles, he introduces him, in connection with God, as exercising a continued agency in the care of the Church, whereas none of the other Apostles do the same. In the Epistle to the Romans, "Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, *and the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

It is from no conception of his participating in the divine nature, for the phrase for the Deity is "God *our* Father." "God *our* Father," of course, represents and exhausts the whole divine essence. It is not "God *the* Father," but "God *our* Father." In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Grace be to you and peace, from God *our* Father, and *from the Lord Jesus Christ.*" The same form occurs in the Second Epistle, in Galatians, and the Epistles generally. I speak of this as an instance of *conformity of language to a peculiar experience*, which is worthy of notice, and a strong feature of reality.

But the characteristic of Paul's Epistles to which I wish to devote especial attention is their exhibition of *a strong abiding and unwavering faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, and the Sent of God.* As abiding, as unwavering, was the conviction, the *consciousness*, we might rather say, *that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ.* Everywhere he writes, without hesitation, doubt, or misgiving, "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ." It is very difficult to conceive that he did not *know* whether he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ or not. That he *believed* himself to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ is just as certain an historical fact, as it is that there was such a person as Paul.

In these same Epistles, which we feel sure came from his hand, we have the assertion over and over again that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ. There were occasions on which he was compelled to *vindicate* his apostolic character and authority against gainsayers. In writing to the church at Corinth which he had founded, and to which he

had ministered while he supported himself by manual labor, but which had been disturbed in his absence by some Judaizing teachers, who called in question his standing as an Apostle, he says: "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me, for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly, *the signs* of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, *in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.*" "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool;) I am more, in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times I received forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

This account of himself is confirmed by the independent testimony of Luke, who was for many years his companion and fellow-sufferer.

Now all these things prove, if anything is capable of being proved, the historic fact, not only that there was such a person as Paul, and that he did and suffered the things which are related of him, but that he *believed* that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Not only so, not only did Paul believe himself to

be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, but to have been more enlightened on one point than the other Apostles, by especial revelation from Christ himself. That point was *the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles.* He thus speaks of it in his Epistle to the Galatians: "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

In his Epistle to the Ephesians he refers to the same subject in similar language: "For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, — if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward; *how that by revelation* he made known unto me the mystery, ... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same

body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel."

Now, no one can read this without feeling that Paul *believed* what he wrote, and that to him it was a *solemn reality* that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, or that he labored for about thirty years under a most astonishing hallucination.

Thus, the evidence of the New Testament is conclusive, that all the immediate disciples of Jesus, and afterwards his Apostles, had the deepest conviction of the divine mission and authority of their Master.

Thus the faith of the world draws its nourishment from the faith of the Apostles. It is a faith of sympathy as well as of conviction. Belief is generated in the mind, while the eyes take in the simple, earnest testimony of the original witnesses. There is such sincere conviction in their own hearts, that the thought scarcely occurs to us to doubt them, any more than to distrust the evidence of our senses.

DISCOURSE VIII.

PERFECT MORALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO DESTROY THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS: I AM NOT COME TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFIL. FOR VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE SHALL IN NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW TILL ALL BE FULFILLED. WHOSOEVER, THEREFORE, SHALL BREAK ONE OF THESE LEAST COMMANDMENTS, AND SHALL TEACH MEN SO, HE SHALL BE CALLED THE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL DO AND TEACH THEM, THE SAME SHALL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. FOR I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT EXCEPT YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YE SHALL IN NO CASE ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. — Matthew v. 17 – 20.

It is a fact of no slight importance among the historical evidences of Christianity, that *Jesus inculcated the most stringent, uncompromising, and exacting morality* that was ever promulgated among men. It is both minute and comprehensive. It is practical, at the same time that it is spiritual. It is reasonable, at the same time that it appeals to the highest and purest motives that can be proposed to the human mind. It neglects every worldly and inferior motive, and refers to *justice*, to *sympathy*, and *the will of God.*

It passes over prudence and a worldly expediency, and points to the All-seeing Eye and the retributions of eternity. It will be the object of this discourse, first to call attention to this feature of the teaching of Jesus, and then to show its bearing on the great question, whether his doctrine was of God or whether he spoke of himself.

I shall first notice the fact of *the stringent and uncompromising morality of the teaching of Jesus.* To show this, it will not be necessary to go beyond the Sermon on the Mount. I appeal to every reader to say, if he is not struck with astonishment, and almost filled with despair, as he reads sentence after sentence of this most searching discourse. The field of human duty becomes exceeding broad, the sphere of conscience is extended to the minutest objects in it, and we rise from the perusal, exclaiming, Who then can be saved? He commences by declaring that they are in error who imagine that he is to *relax* the strictness of the Mosaic laws, or promulgate a system which demands a less degree of moral excellence. He who breaks one of the least of the Mosaic precepts, or teaches others to do so, shall have no claim to the name of a Christian.

But the Mosaic law had been corrupted and explained away. The Scribes and Pharisees, who were the chief religious teachers of the time, had weakened the force of the ancient commandments, imperfect as they were. They had given men pretences for the indulgence of their passions and appetites, retaining still a claim to the religious character. Righteousness they made to consist in a scrupulous performance of the ceremonial law. They

paid to religious purposes a tenth part of their garden herbs, but indulged in spiritual vices within the secret recesses of their own minds, and gave way to malice and all uncharitableness.

Jesus, in the very opening of his first discourse, cut up this Pharisaical morality by the roots, and placed the spiritual before the ceremonial. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is *angry* with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." And from this he goes on to deduce the general principle of the worthlessness of all ceremonial performances in comparison with the spiritual virtues of the soul. "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and *there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee*, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; *first be reconciled to thy brother*, and then come and offer thy gift."

With what utter discouragement must this have struck upon the ears of a Jew, who was accustomed to believe that the very *act* of sacrifice was an atonement for his moral delinquencies, and a substitute for a scrupulous obedience to the Divine law!

Next he proceeds to *the government of the appetites*, and promulgates a law so stringent, that the wisest of men have exclaimed against it as altogether too severe for human infirmity. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever *looketh on a woman to lust after her* hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." But this doctrine, though severe, is after all only reason-

able and just. Of course, the *possession* of appetite is not culpable, for if so, God would be the author of sin; but the *will* to indulge it in opposition to the higher law of the mind.

He next proceeds to *the law of divorce*, and greatly restricts the license which was given by the Mosaic law in this respect. In that age the liberty of divorce which had been allowed to husbands was carried to the greatest excess. The happiness of wives and families was sacrificed to the most trifling gratification of ill-temper or caprice. How slight the marriage vow was held was revealed by the result of that searching proposition made by the prophetic mind of Jesus, when the woman was brought before him taken in adultery: "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone." "And they that heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the eldest even unto the last." How low must the condition of morality have fallen, when of a group of men taken indiscriminately from the community there was not one who had not broken the seventh commandment!

He proceeds to show that the laws of Moses, imperfect as they were, had not been carried out, but had been nullified and explained away by the teachings and traditions of men. *The law of oaths* and *the sin of profaneness* received from him a more comprehensive and universal exposition. "Swear not at all," said he. "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

Next comes *a total prohibition of revenge and retaliation*, which was thought allowable under the

elder dispensation, and esteemed even praiseworthy and magnanimous among the heathen. Sylla, one of the greatest among the Romans, caused it to be engraved upon his tombstone as his highest glory, that no one had ever outdone him in benefiting his friends or in taking vengeance on his enemies.

The precept of Jesus was, "Resist not evil." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

He next proceeds to draw *a sharp line of distinction between true and false devotion*, and sends his disciple to the privacy of his own closet, and opens his soul to the secret glance of the omniscient God. To use the forms of devotion is not prayer. *Prayer is the sincere, the fervent communion of the soul with God*, and the publican who smote upon his breast with the ejaculation, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "*went down to his house justified*," — with that peace which true devotion never fails to bring with it.

Then comes *the duty of forgiveness;* a duty so hard to the proud and haughty spirit, which so easily springs up and nestles in the heart of man. Yet it *must* be done, for it has an awful alternative and penalty when unfulfilled. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Next, he proceeds *absolutely to forbid worldliness and avarice*, the besetting sin of humanity. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

An eager pursuit of the things of this world he counts a pagan vice, wholly unworthy of a people who have received a revelation from God, and, of course, are taught a higher object of being. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? *for after all these things do the Gentiles seek;* for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Where else can we find such severe morality as this? Wealth is forbidden to be sought *as an end.* If it be, it is too apt to become an object of idolatry. It enslaves the mind. An inordinate desire of wealth degenerates into *a worship of Mammon.* And then the very purpose of the possession of wealth is defeated.

The first legitimate use of wealth is to free the mind from anxiety. A multitude of wants is inevitable. They pursue us from the cradle to the grave. To be freed from their importunities is certainly a very natural object of desire. But when a man passes on from this, and seeks wealth for its own

sake, for the mere pleasure of possessing riches, the very care of it brings an anxiety of its own, and too often it augments to an intolerable burden.

Such was the standard of morality set up by Christ. It is an historical fact, if anything in the New Testament is to be relied on as such, that these *were* the requirements proposed by him to be exacted of his followers. *It is a genuine, thorough, sincere, spiritual morality.* It is not a mere prudence, it is not based on a worldly expediency. It appeals to no low or earthly motive. Its appeal is to the all-seeing eye of the omniscient God. Its *requirements*, therefore, and its *motives*, are far above anything that had ever been taught before.

The Jews, we have already seen, had learned nothing from their law so pure and exalted. The teachings of Christ were a new revelation to them, and we clearly see why "they were astonished at his doctrine," and confessed that "never man spake like this man."

If it was so with the Jews with regard to Jesus, how much more must it have been with the heathen with regard to his Apostles, when they went abroad beyond the bounds of Judæa to propagate the Gospel in foreign lands! The contrast between the requirements of Christianity and the practices of the purest pagan communities was wide. We have reason to believe, from heathen testimonies, that the descriptions given by Paul, who was himself a native of a pagan city, were not overcharged when he declares that they were "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate,

deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful; proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

There was, in fact, among the heathen, nothing to *sustain* morality. *Morality has a natural dependence on religion and theology.* The religion of the heathen was nothing but a mass of superstitious observances, having very little connection with the regulation of the heart, or the conduct of life. To keep up the forms of external religion, the priesthood were compelled to make liberal compromises with the vices of mankind. They bribed men to sacrifice, by concluding the religious ceremonies with a feast, in which the sensual propensities of men were indulged with an almost unlimited license, and the very temples of the gods were often the fountain-head of impurity and licentiousness.

Their religious rites were for the most part idle ceremonies, or pompous processions, or public games, or hidden mysteries, which neither enlightened the mind nor quickened the conscience. Their priests were ordinary men, engaged in the common pursuits of the world, lawyers, generals, politicians, with no more than an average intellectual culture, or religious experience, or sanctity of life.

The *theology* upon which their religion was founded was, if possible, more imperfect and objectionable still. The gods whom they worshipped, instead of being models of character, were stained with nearly all the vices which pollute and degrade mankind. The thief and the robber had his patron

deity, to whom he prayed as fervently as the virtuous man did to Jupiter himself.

Morality itself was studied as a science by a few philosophers, some of whom went far in ascertaining its principles and precepts. But the different schools of philosophers differed from each other on the most important matters of human duty. Everything was thrown into a state of uncertainty. There was no provision made for public instruction, or for communicating to the many the knowledge which was possessed by the few.

But it is an historical fact, *that the Apostles went forth with the simple power of the Gospel, and wrought a moral revolution.* They formed a *Church* on a higher moral level than had ever been conceived of before. They were not philosophers, nor highly educated men, yet they promulgated a system of theological doctrine, and of moral duty, such as all the philosophers had been unable to invent. Mankind were brought to submit to the great law of *self-denial*, the severest yoke that was ever imposed on man, the indispensable condition and the most effectual discipline of virtue.

What now are the inferences to be drawn from these historical facts, as to the *origin* of Christianity?

In the first place, *the perfect morality of the Gospel is a demonstration of the supernatural wisdom of Jesus.* To invent a code of morals which should be perfect, exactly adjusted to human nature as it is, — which should be adapted to man in every possible condition, satisfy his reason and his conscience, and at the same time impose no impracticable restraint

upon his passions and appetites, steer a middle course between ascetic self-denial and Epicurean self-indulgence, neither sacrifice the individual to society nor society to the individual,—which should accompany man in every step of his development, and make him prosperous and successful in all,—requires a wisdom second only to that which was necessary to create the world. It is this feature in Christianity which has struck the profoundest minds and the greatest statesmen with astonishment.

Its *extreme difficulty* has been manifested by the utter failure of the greatest minds that have ever appeared in the world, when they have attempted the same. Lawgivers had tried it, philosophers had tried it, and all had failed. The wise men of Greece had enunciated a few propositions, and laid down a few rules of life, which strike the mind, even of a Christian, as true and noble. But a few short sentences were enough to make the reputation of a great man.

They acknowledged themselves involved in great uncertainty, and that all were wrong in many things was too clearly proved by the fact that they *differed* from each other. *Truth is one*, and when different minds discover it, it finds its strongest corroboration *in that coincidence.*

The Sermon on the Mount contained within its short compass more wisdom than all the philosophers combined. And it is enunciated not as a matter of *opinion*, as were the dogmas of the philosophers; it is promulgated upon *authority*, as a matter of certainty, as fixed as the universe itself. And when Jesus left the earth, he commanded his disciples, "Go, preach my Gospel to every creature."

Moreover, the wisdom of Jesus was crowned and consummated by *a faultless life*, a deportment free from every taint of eccentricity or extravagance. He kept himself at an equal distance from *affectation*, *asceticism*, and *sensuality*. Whatever fanaticisms or excesses have appeared in different ages among the professed followers of Christ, none of them could ever plead the shadow of a precedent or example in their Master. He sat at feasts with the publican and Pharisee, he ministered miraculously to the festivities of a marriage, yet he shunned alike the ostentatious sanctity of the Pharisee and the profane license of the Sadducee. And the absurd seclusion of the Essene, and his self-imposed abstinence from every natural gratification, were equally alien to the wise moderation of the Legislator of the world.

In the second place, *the perfect morality of the Gospel is a guaranty of the absolute integrity of Jesus.* He professed to derive his doctrines immediately from God. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me," said he, in his last solemn parting prayer with his disciples, "and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou dost send me."

The perfection of his doctrine corresponded with the source from which he professed to derive it. It bore this evidence of a divine original, that not only had no one ever devised so perfect a system, and even no combination or succession of men been able to do it, but *it immediately began to be corrupted in the hands of his successors.* Not only was the whole

world incapable of *inventing* such a system, but incapable of *preserving* it in its perfection when it was invented.

Then we must consider that, if the mission of Christ was not real, if he was *conscious* that he was professing an intercourse with the Deity that had really no existence, his pretension to it was *a fraud and a deception.* Those who would be inclined to think most favorably of such a proceeding would call it a *pious* fraud. It was intended to deceive mankind for their good. Was such an habitual purpose consistent with the known facts of his character?

Let us consider how this thing stands. The two most prominent characteristics which we discover in the history of Jesus are *wisdom* and *piety.* Nothing is more abhorrent to true wisdom than deception. True wisdom discerns that deception generally defeats its own end, if it be a bad one, and much more so if the end be good. The benefit which he was to confer upon the world was to depend on *faith in himself*, in the integrity of his character, and in his mission from God.

What hope could he have of long deceiving the world, if his mission was false? He early rested the proof of his mission *on his resurrection from the dead.* If he was conscious that he was *not* what he pretended to be, he must have known that the stone would *never* be rolled from the door of the sepulchre, and his enemies would exhibit his lifeless body in triumph when the three days were past.

The supposition of an *impostor* teaching a perfect system of religion and morality is one which strikes

us as an utter impossibility, and our minds refuse to entertain it for a moment. The teaching of the New Testament is not the mere exercise of the speculative intellect. *The heart was in it*, for it continually appeals to the heart of the reader, and he says to himself, "If this does not emanate from perfect integrity, it is in vain to expect that the earth will ever afford the spectacle of a man on whom we can implicitly rely."

Thirdly and finally, I come to the main argument of this Discourse: *How could the world be brought to submit to the strict morality of the Christian system?* It is an historical fact, that a portion of mankind *were* brought to submit to it. The Church has ever maintained a morality far above the level of the world. It is one thing to bring mankind to *see* what is right, and quite another *to induce them to do it.* There must have been, not only an increase of light, but *an increase of motive.* There must have been a moral cause equal to the effect produced.

I begin with the Apostles. We cannot read the New Testament without perceiving a striking change taking place in their characters. They were at first narrow-minded, ambitious, selfish, and worldly. In their writings, which compose the New Testament, we have delineated what they became before they left the world. We take, for instance, Peter, an impulsive, rash, fickle man, who at one hour of the day was ready to die for his Master, and at another denied that he knew him, with an oath. But take up his Epistle, and you find the untutored, undisciplined fisherman of Galilee transformed into a saint and a sage. Oracles of condensed

wisdom and piety flow from his pen, which the highest intellect and culture and religious experience of after times cannot approach. Such attainments could not have been reached without a moral control and self-discipline of the most extraordinary character. That moral control and self-discipline must have had a *motive power.* And what was it? *It was an overwhelming conviction of the supernatural character and authority of Jesus of Nazareth.* Hence the phraseology is everywhere, "*Our Lord* Jesus Christ." There was a greatness in him, in his spotless character, in his unerring wisdom, his inviolable dignity, his invincible meekness, his oceanic knowledge, his control over nature, his triumph over death, which enthroned him in the hearts of his disciples, and made him King of kings and Lord of lords. His very presence was a moral power, and virtue went out of him continually, to strengthen the pure, to reform the wicked, to raise the fallen, and restore the lost.

Next, it is an historical fact, *that a church was formed at Jerusalem,* from the midst of the Jewish community, who had been believers in the divine mission of Moses, and who were induced to become the professed followers of Jesus, and to enter upon a life of piety and self-denial far above the level of their former discipline. Such a change of religion involved sacrifice, social disadvantage, renunciation of honor, pleasure, and comfort. What could have been a sufficient *motive* for submission to the rigid morality of the Gospel, except *a thorough conviction of the Divine mission and authority of Jesus and his Apostles,* who demanded this submission at their

hands? How can we account for such a moral effect, except by supposing an adequate cause, in the exhibition of those *miraculous credentials* which the historical documents of Christianity record to have been placed before the senses of that generation?

The case is stronger with the heathen. The change demanded in their daily life was still greater, the yoke which they were called to take upon themselves was still heavier. Freedom of action is the last thing that men are willing to surrender. Every man loves to have his own way, or at least to be left to judge for himself, as to what he is to do and what he is to forbear; and he scrutinizes very narrowly the credentials of him who comes to him and attempts to dictate to him his conduct, to lay down his duties, and prescribe his indulgences. And yet, in the midst of the most luxurious, corrupt, and sensual capitals of the Roman empire, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, Christian churches were formed, large communities of men and women submitted themselves to the pure morality of the Gospel, and became worthy followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

There is no rational way, in my judgment, of accounting for this historical fact, but by supposing that the *authority of Jesus and his Apostles was substantiated by miraculous testimonials*, which left no doubt that the law they promulgated came from God, the only rightful Lord of conscience, and only legitimate Legislator of mankind.

DISCOURSE IX.

PERSONALITY OF GOD.

JESUS CRIED AND SAID, HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME, BELIEVETH NOT ON ME, BUT ON HIM THAT SENT ME. — John xii. 44.

In the seven preceding Discourses, I have discussed one of the constituent elements into which I have analyzed the New Testament. I have given what seemed to me to be the most prominent *historical facts* upon which may be based a rational conviction of the divine origin of Christianity. I have merely indicated the classification, and enumerated those historical facts which are most convincing to my own mind. I do not pretend to have exhausted the subject. Other facts may be more striking to other minds, and each new student of the Evidences may be able to bring forth something unobserved or undeveloped before.

I now pass to the *second element*, the Doctrines taught by Christ. Having established the authority of Jesus, and exhibited the credentials with which he came, it is next in order to ascertain *the message he brought*, and consider *the truths* which he communicated or confirmed.

The enumeration of these will not be exhaustive. It will only embrace the most important. I shall pass over the existence and the unity of God, which, though clearly taught by Christ, were already in the world, one by the teachings of nature, and the other being the fundamental doctrine of the Mosaic dispensation. The providence of God is as clearly taught in nature as his existence. I shall pass, therefore, to the Personality and the Paternity of God. I shall dwell on the personality, because I deem this truth fundamental to religion, and because I think the personal history of Christ has bearings upon this vital subject, which are not always, or perhaps readily, perceived. After these will come the Efficacy of Prayer, the Forgiveness of Sins, Immortality, and Retribution.

And first I shall call attention to the confirmation which the ministry of Christ lends to the doctrine of the Personality of God.

The power of Christianity in the world depends, and always has depended, mainly on the clearer apprehension and the stronger conviction it gives us *of the personality of God.* It is through Christ chiefly that we know God *as a person,* and thus he is brought near to us, he makes real to us our personal connection with him, and brings to bear the whole infinity of his nature in the form of an ever-present intelligence, mind, will, and affections, on *our* minds, wills, and affections. To the extent of that realization, the effect upon our conduct and characters is inevitable, almost mechanical, to restrain, to console, to awe, and to win us. It is the purpose of this Discourse to unfold this great truth, and to show how

much it explains of the spiritual life, as well as the intellectual dogmatism, of the Church.

The connection in which this passage stands throws much light on its meaning. Many of the chief rulers were secretly persuaded that Jesus was the true Messiah, yet dared not confess their convictions, lest they should be expelled from the synagogue. There was much inconvenience, as well as terror and disgrace, in this punishment, and honorable men, as well as true Israelites, shrunk away appalled from this kind of notoriety. They felt the benefits of standing well with their friends and neighbors, and were unwilling to forego them.

Jesus felt the bearing of these things on himself. He felt that there was *a prejudice* against him personally. His humble exterior, his disclaimer of all worldly honor and authority, his denial to his followers of all personal ambition, he saw were operating against the popularity of his cause. Such a position could not but have given him pain.

It was under the influence of these feelings, apparently, that he exclaimed, in the words of our text, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." I am nothing. God, who acts in and through me, is all in all. I came not to attract your notice, or arrogate your homage to myself. *I am merely the means of making you sensible of your allegiance to God.* I do not ask you to fix your faith *on me*, as if I were anything in and of myself. I do not wish to have you believe on me in that sense. I wish you to fix your faith more vividly and firmly on God, for the manifestations he is making of himself through me. This last sentence,

as I believe, conveys precisely the sense of the words of the Saviour. This, in my judgment, was the great end and object of the mission of Christ, — to fix the faith of mankind more firmly and vividly on God as *a personal agent*, perpetually present to their souls, — that infinite and all-pervading Essence, in whom they not only live and move and have their being, but who has spoken to them by the voice of Jesus Christ.

No real relation of God to us has ever been changed, or ever could be changed, by any intervention. God is the Former of all bodies, and the Father of all spirits. It is by his all-sustaining energy that all souls are upheld in being, and in the possession of every power that they enjoy. The workings of reason and conscience are only his varied agency, *reason*, which teaches us that God is, and *conscience*, which informs us what he requires of us.

These are the postulates and necessary conditions of all external revelation. If there were no common revelation of God made by reason, there could be no special one made by miraculous communication. Were there no *innate* sense of right, no specific revelation could create it. It is impossible, therefore, that supernatural revelation can be anything more than *supplementary* to natural religion, and *confirmatory* of it.

Let us then consider what natural religion is, what are its capabilities, and what are its defects.

Let us cast books and tradition aside, and consider what we are taught by what we see and experience. In the first place, reason makes us religious beings by suggesting to us the intuitive truth,

that there cannot be an effect without a cause, there cannot be motion without a mover, there cannot be a creature without a Creator. *We are creatures, and therefore we must have a Creator.* That Creator must be commensurate with the work he has made. A Being who could create us, body and soul, must have unbounded intelligence, must be, as far as we can conceive, omniscient.

As reason reveals to us God as an *intellectual* being, so conscience reveals to us God as a *moral* being. We perceive some things to be right and others to be wrong, and we are conscious of moral freedom, and power to choose between them. When we do right or wrong, we are so constituted as not to regard it as a mere private transaction, in which we alone are concerned; but there is another party related to it, God, who made and upholds us. We have not only been imprudent as respects ourselves, but we are guilty before God. Thus we are constituted religious beings by the primordial elements of our nature.

But here the clear teachings of natural religion stop. Of the nature of God we have only the most shadowy conception; whether he hears our prayers, whether he will forgive the penitent, whether he intends to continue our existence after death, is by the light of nature a matter of conjecture, seeming more or less probable, according to the state of our minds or the presentation of evidence.

Hence the vast variety and diversity of pagan religions. They are the mere developments of natural religion, the conclusions of human reason, the expressions of human reverence, the acknowledgments

of human guilt, the articulate voice of that universal desire to propitiate the Power above, which is innate in every human breast. The world would never have seen anything better, had there not been something better offered in the shape of a *revelation*, or what professed to be a revelation, *from heaven*, and what was received by mankind as such.

Such was precisely the state of things, as we are informed by the Sacred Scriptures, in the days of Abraham. That patriarch, we are told, was born and educated among idolaters; and after wandering among their doubts and uncertainties, God revealed himself to him as a person, saying to him at one time: "I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect." At another: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." What an effect must such a communication as this have had upon the human mind! How many doubts and uncertainties must have been removed by it! Before, it was a *probability* that God was a person. Henceforward, it was a *certainty*. God himself had spoken out of the eternal silence. He, who is a pure spirit, whose presence is everywhere diffused, had condescended to accommodate himself to man's finite nature and material organization, and to assure man of the most important fact, that, though infinite in being, *he has the attributes of personality*.

How changed must the universe have afterwards seemed to the patriarch! How much more real the existence, the providence, and the presence of God! How much more close and personal the relation which he himself sustained to the Author of his being!

Pass on to Moses. Mature in years, wise by experience, and learned in all the science of Egypt, still he knew God only by a dim and distant faith. He had heard of the communications made to the patriarchs, he had received the tradition of the promises. But since the fathers fell asleep, all things had remained as they were from the beginning. The seasons revolved, the Nile flowed on, generations were born and died, and still the chosen people were groaning under a cruel bondage. All nations, except the descendants of Jacob, were idolaters. Which was the true religion, or were they all uncertain alike? In exile, in a desert, where all hope seemed to be extinct, he sees the burning bush, and hears the voice of God, saying, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Go, redeem Israel from the bondage of Egypt."

What an overwhelming, transforming power must such an interview have exerted on mortal man! *The realization of the personality of God*, the certainty that he watches over the things of earth, and takes an interest in the affairs and fortunes of individuals!

Reason, at first, revolts from such a representation, that God should break the uniform order of his works, and specially make known his will to any individual of the human race, — that God who fills immensity and inhabits eternity, and superintends the millions of worlds which float in boundless space, with all their countless inhabitants. This would seem at first incredible, did we not find that he condescends still more, and creates and upholds crea-

tures innumerable in the air we breathe, and in the drops of water which fall to our sight clear and unclouded as the light which streams in the sunbeam. When we consider these indisputable facts, all our presumptions against a divine revelation, *a personal communication of God to men*, become inconclusive, and are laid aside as wholly unreliable.

This conviction of the *personality*, and at the same time of the *spirituality* of God, must have been communicated by Moses to the Israelites; they must have been confirmed in it by the plagues of Egypt, by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night which led them through the wilderness, by the daily manna, and by the thunders of Sinai. In the tabernacle too, and afterwards in the temple, there was some *special* manifestation of the Divine presence. With a wise economy, the ark, containing the tables of the Law and the five books of Moses, was placed in the holy of holies, a place entered but once a year, and only by the high-priest. Over the ark, two cherubim spread out their overshadowing wings. There is nothing said of God's *personal* presence there, yet human imagination immediately associated him with that place, *and the lid of the ark itself was called the mercy-seat.* Thus it is said in the eightieth psalm: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Israel like a flock; *thou that dwellest between the cherubims*, shine forth." And in the ninety-ninth: "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble; *he sitteth between the cherubims;* let the earth be moved."

All our ideas of personality being derived from some manifestation confined to a definite space, and

some material organs, it is next to impossible to conceive of the personality of God except under the same conditions, either by the means of something that strikes the eye or ear. *It is next to impossible to conceive of God as a spirit, everywhere present alike.* Hence the proneness of all ages to idolatry. Human nature, in its weakness, has cried out for *some material representation of God*, to fix thought, to aid conception, and to awaken emotion.

And yet all such representations of God were strictly forbidden, because, though they assisted human thought, conception, and emotion, they limited and degraded God. Instead of elevating man toward God, as devotion is designed to do, they brought down God towards man, and thus neutralized the most efficient means of his own exaltation.

God, in communicating with men, was compelled, if we may so speak, *to condescend to human imperfection*, and to use material instruments, such as might affect the senses of men, — the burning bush, the fire of Sinai, — but with a caution that it should not lead men into idolatry. Says Moses to the Israelites: "And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. ..... Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye *corrupt yourselves*, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female."

Such means were used in the old dispensation to reveal the personality of God, to hold personal com-

munion with men, and to aid them in realizing their personal relations to him, on which the very power and vitality of religion depend. And such were, at the same time, the precautions which were taken against idolatry, the deification of those things through which God held communication with men. On the same principle it was, doubtless, that the grave of Moses was concealed from the Israelites. It was that they might be saved from the snare of exaggerating their veneration for him into superstition and idolatry. It is written of him, that when he descended from the mountain, his face shone with a preternatural light. What more natural than for the ignorance and imagination of after ages *to exalt him into an incarnation of the Divinity*, and pay divine honors to him at his tomb?

In the new dispensation, there was no burning bush, no pillar of cloud and fire, no smoke and flame like that of Sinai, with a voice coming out of the brightness. There was no tabernacle or temple with the glory of the Lord resting upon it, the symbol of the Divine presence; no holy of holies with its mercy-seat.

But in the place of all these *was the person of Jesus Christ.* Through him was the new revelation made to mankind. His person was the only shrine of the Divinity, in which God made himself known anew to the human race. We cannot read the New Testament without becoming fully impressed with the belief, that God revealed himself to Jesus *as a person*, and that Jesus held personal communication with God. At the grave of Lazarus, it is recorded of him: "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said,

Father, I thank thee *that thou hast heard me.* And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

Now this language plainly implies, if it does not expressly assert, that he had before prayed to God for the power to work this miracle of the raising of Lazarus, and in answer to his prayer God had given him *distinct, intelligible assurance*, that he would perform the miracle. How this communication was made, we do not know, nor perhaps can we know. The prayer of Christ had been *mental*, and the answer may have been so too.

But, on the other hand, that there was *no community of consciousness* between God and Christ, we know with the same certainty; for, in that case, under no circumstances *would it have been possible, or consistent, or truthful, for Christ to pray.* And he himself disclaims the knowledge of the time when the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish dispensation, were to take place: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father only." Both his supernatural knowledge and supernatural powers were communicated *to a limited extent.* There was then *no incarnation of God;* the very idea is pagan, not Christian. An infinite spirit *cannot* become incarnate. An infinite God *may manifest his presence* to a finite spirit, incarnate in the flesh, so as to make that manifestation a matter of certain knowledge.

This is the very thing which seems to have taken place in regard to Jesus. How it was, we cannot

define; we can judge of it only by its effects, and the testimony of Jesus himself. The connection between God and Christ is expressed by John in this phraseology: "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for *God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*" The gift of the Spirit, not by measure, does not affirm, but *denies*, incarnation.

As far as we can judge from the history, that fulness of the Spirit descended upon him at his baptism, and from that moment there was manifested by him an unapproachable dignity, a conscious authority, an unerring wisdom, an oceanic knowledge, comprehensive, penetrating, and profound, a sinless perfection, and a self-command wholly transcending all human attainment. To notify to the world this presence of God in Christ, or rather, what amounts to the same thing, the presence of the Spirit of God without measure, — besides its natural consequences, an inviolable dignity, a sinless perfection, and a wisdom high as heaven and deep as the sea, — external nature was subjected to his command, diseases departed, the dead were raised, and the storm was stilled.

But this is not the precise point which it is the design of this Discourse to touch. There was, as the consequence or the substance of all this, *a conscious communing of Christ with God as a person*, which was peculiar and unexampled; and consequently a knowledge of God and spiritual things, most intimate, special, and precious to the world. It is professed and expressed by him on various occasions and in various ways. At one time he said: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and

hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." At another time: "As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father." At another: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven." This is a figure of speech derived from the secrecy and seclusion of Oriental courts, where all public counsels were resolved on by the sovereign in the most private apartment of his palace. *To know the secret counsels of God*, therefore, was equivalent to having been admitted into the court of heaven. That no reference to place is intended, appears by the fact that Jesus *was then in heaven*, in the sense there intended, though he was locally upon earth.

By all this variety of language, a deep impression is made upon our minds, not only of the divine mission of Jesus, but, what is still more important to our faith and piety, of the *personality of God*. God is not, as the pantheists represent, the totality of the universe, and we ourselves a part of him or it. He is not, like the deities of the ancient philosophers, far removed from all concern in human affairs, too negligent or too insensible to observe our individual condition, or to listen to our prayers. He is an infinite spirit, but at the same time *a person*. He revealed himself to Jesus *as a person*. To Jesus that personality was not a matter of faith, but of *knowledge*. He not only believed in God, but he *knew* God, he held com-

munication with God, he received immediate proof that his prayer was heard by God.

Our faith in God is lifted up from the level of *rational conviction* to a higher bond of *sympathy with Christ's knowledge*, and the personality of God becomes a reality to us.

We are now able to appreciate the force and meaning of Christ's words in the text: "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." As if he said, I, personally, am nothing. I ask no homage to myself except as *the Sent of God*, by whom you are enabled to cherish a more vivid and influential faith in the unseen Deity. I come not to *interpose* between you and God, or to *intercept* one particle of that reverence which you are bound to pay to him, but to strengthen your allegiance to the Infinite Father.

This measureless communication of the Holy Spirit, or, as we may express it, this intimate and conscious intercourse of Jesus with God, attracted the attention of his Apostles, and made upon their minds the profoundest impression, and they labor in their language to convey their impression of it.

Not only did his character, his words and works, produce this impression concerning him, *but his own language concerning himself.* The Jews often demanded a sign from heaven, which was nothing other than some manifestation of God's especial presence, to authenticate Jesus as a divine lawgiver; such as the fiery and cloudy pillars, the glories of Sinai, or the manna which fell from heaven with the dew for forty years. And there was one occasion on which the disciples gave into the same idea, and ex-

pressed the same desire. "Show us the Father," said they, "and it sufficeth us." It sufficeth, not our curiosity, but our faith. Give us some sensible manifestation of the presence of God, such as our fathers received from Moses, and then our faith and confidence will be full and complete. "Jesus answered, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" He then goes on to explain in what sense. "The words which I speak, I speak not of myself; the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." My miraculous words and works are sufficient evidence of the special presence of God in me. I shall appeal to no burning bush, or blazing mountain, or cloudy pillar, or visible glory. My miraculous powers, my heavenly doctrines are sufficient.

Of this indwelling of God in Christ, notwithstanding some passing doubts, the Apostles were fully persuaded, and they express it, as I have already said, in a great variety of ways. John, with his warm heart and glowing imagination, leads off in the commencement of his Gospel. *He makes Jesus to be an incarnation of God's Word*, that revelation which God had been making of himself since the creation of the world. Such a strong impression did that which was divine in Christ make upon John, who was daily in his society and leaned on his bosom, that to his thought *it became personified*, and is represented as a person. Not only so, it absorbs into itself the personality of God on the one

hand, and of Christ on the other. The whole being of God is absorbed into the Word. "The Word was God," or, as it may be rendered, "God was the Word."

On the other hand, the personality of Jesus, otherwise so clearly asserted and implied, is lost sight of, or more strictly, perhaps, made the tabernacle, or dwelling-place, of the Divine Word. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And the person thus endowed seemed so manifestly conversant with God, and was so exalted in our sight by that manifestation of God's presence, that he seemed to be with God as an only son with his father.

In the same strain he says afterwards: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Here the degree of intimacy which seemed to subsist between Jesus and God is expressed by an allusion to the manner in which the Jews sat, or rather reclined, at table. Each leaned over the bosom of him who was placed at his left hand. To be in one's bosom, then, in Oriental phrase, means to be on terms of the greatest intimacy.

From that intimacy came forth to mankind a more perfect knowledge of God. "He who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared him." From that greater intimacy of Jesus with God, and greater knowledge of him, his character, mind, and will, came forth Christianity, as superior to Judaism as was the knowledge of God possessed by Jesus to that possessed by Moses. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the

law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

To the same effect he writes in his old age: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding, that we might know him that is true; and we are *in* him that is true through his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Such is the function which John attributes to Jesus as the *Revealer of the true God.* To be *in* God, in the highly figurative language of the Apostle, is to *know* God, to *believe* in God, to *trust* in God, to *obey* God.

In the same direction follows Paul. He compares the knowledge we have of God, through Christ, and God's presence in Christ, with the shining of the face of Moses when he came down from the mountain. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Jesus Christ.*" As the light which first shone out of darkness at God's command revealed the Creator in his works, so he shone out a second time to make a clearer revelation of himself *through the person of Christ*, in his supernatural character, words, and works.

Lastly, Peter, in his First Epistle, takes the same view of Christ, as the means by which our faith in God is strengthened and increased. "Who verily was *foreordained* before the foundation of the world, but *appeared* in these last times for you, who *by him* do believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."

Thus the writers of the New Testament are unanimous in declaring, that faith in Christ has nothing to do with his *nature;* it is faith in *God* through Christ, — the more clear, definite, and efficient revelation made of him by Jesus, than had been made by nature or the Mosaic dispensation. As Jesus said himself, " Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and *believeth on him that sent me,* hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

DISCOURSE X.

PATERNITY OF GOD.

TAKE HEED THAT YE DESPISE NOT ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES; FOR I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT IN HEAVEN THEIR ANGELS DO ALWAYS BEHOLD THE FACE OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. FOR THE SON OF MAN IS COME TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST. HOW THINK YE? IF A MAN HAVE A HUNDRED SHEEP, AND ONE OF THEM BE GONE ASTRAY, DOTH HE NOT LEAVE THE NINETY AND NINE, AND GOETH INTO THE MOUNTAINS, AND SEEKETH THAT WHICH IS GONE ASTRAY? AND IF SO BE THAT HE FIND IT, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, HE REJOICETH MORE OVER THAT SHEEP, THAN OF THE NINETY AND NINE WHICH WENT NOT ASTRAY. EVEN SO, IT IS NOT THE WILL OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN THAT ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES SHOULD PERISH. — Matthew xviii. 10 - 14.

NEXT to the personality of God, in importance and moral power, among the doctrines taught or recognized by Christ, is *the paternity of God*, that *God is a Father*. No words can measure the importance of this doctrine to Christianity, either in modifying our conceptions of the Divine character, or commanding our affections and obedience. The most exalting and consoling truths are comprehended and implied in this single appellation.

It implies the correlative truth, *that we are the*

children of God, not alone *his creatures*, for whose physical wants he provides, but *his children*, for whose *moral* welfare he is above all things solicitous. This is a point upon which the human heart desires especially to be assured. God's *physical* providence is demonstrable, plain, and undeniable. Man, as an animal, is plainly under God's immediate care. Life itself is sustained and prolonged by his immediate agency. The fertility of the earth produces to man his daily food, the sun gives him light by day, and the silence and darkness of the night give him a season of repose. But this physical care man shares with the beasts that perish.

The animals have only one species of good and evil, and that is a merely *physical pleasure or discomfort.* That they are generally in a condition of tranquillity and enjoyment, by the providence of God, is one of the strongest evidences of the Divine goodness.

But to man, there is good and evil of a higher description. Superadded to an animal organization, instincts, and propensities, he has a *moral* nature. To him there is a *wrong* and a *right*, an honorable and a dishonorable, a *truth* and a *falsehood*, a sense of *dignity*, *satisfaction*, and *desert*, when he has done right, and of *humiliation*, *pain*, and *guilt*, when he has done wrong. This, of course, puts within the power of man the attainment of a higher species and degree of happiness than the lower animals, but at the same time subjects him to the danger of plunging into a deeper woe.

These higher endowments *ought* to result in the attainment of higher happiness. But they do not

always arrive at this consummation. They sometimes lead to a depth of misery which casts all animal suffering into the shade. In all cases, the high endowments of man are the cause of more or less suffering. If it be true that God is *the Father of mankind*, and is possessed at the same time of omniscience and omnipotence, why should the possession of a rational, a moral, and a voluntary nature be the cause of suffering at all? If they are necessarily the cause of suffering, why are they conferred on man?

God, as a Father, is bound to consult the highest *moral* good of his children. That human father is thought to be wanting in the highest manifestation of parental affection, who suffers his child to fall into one sin which he can prevent, or fail to acquire a single virtue which he can give him the means of attaining. But what is the fact? To the imperfect vision of man, the moral world seems to be in the greatest disorder. The moral welfare of each individual does *not* seem to be cared for in the highest possible manner. No inconsiderable part of the human race are seen to pass through life under conditions most unfavorable to moral development and perfection, — in barbarism, in slavery, in ignorance, or in the very worst associations. Can the paternal character of God be vindicated in so arranging the world, that any portion of his children should be exposed to moral trials so dangerous, and so often fatal, to their happiness?

Or some might be disposed to go farther back, and inquire, Why should human nature have been constituted as it is? Why should the passions and

appetites have been made so strong, and reason and conscience so weak? Why should the career of humanity commence with infantile weakness and ignorance, and wisdom and virtue be the purchase of perilous experiment, of pain, regret, and remorse? Indeed, so dark is the moral condition of the world, so ineffectual the discipline which God has adopted for the production of holiness and happiness, that various *apologies* have been thought necessary, in order to explain the present state of things in consistency with the paternal character of God.

One of them is, that the world is in a state of ruin. Human nature is not now in the condition in which God created it, but in a state greatly deteriorated. By the sin of our first parents, the balance of human nature, equal before, between good and evil, received a fatal bias to evil, irresistible except by divine interposition. But this explanation does not at all relieve the character of God. It even casts a worse imputation on him than to leave things entirely without explanation. No such powers of ruining the constitution of human nature could have been possessed by the first pair, except by divine appointment. If the moral constitution of the posterity of Adam is determined by his act, then they are deprived of a fair moral probation, a deprivation arising not from the difficulties of their outward circumstances, or the nature of free agency, but from the ruin and disorganization of their moral constitution.

No worse imputation could rest on the character of God, and, if this be true, it must be given up as wholly indefensible. God is *not* a Father, if he makes such arrangements as to suffer his children to

be ruined for ever by an agency over which they have not the slightest control. That human father would be deemed a monster, who should be guilty of such conduct towards his children.

Another explanation is, that all mankind have pre-existed, and in a state of pre-existence have fallen from their original integrity, and are now consequently in a penal state, suffering the just consequences of previous misconduct. This, however, does not remove the difficulty. It only carries it farther back. If all mankind are now in a penal state, all must have sinned, and the experiment of free agency was just as much a failure there as here. Besides, all our ideas of justice demand that he who is punished should *know* that he has offended, and that he is suffering an appropriate punishment for his transgression. But we have *no* consciousness of having sinned in a previous state of existence, and, of course, what we suffer can never *seem* to us to be a just punishment, or a punishment at all. It must seem to us, if we do not understand the grounds of it, as an arbitrary, unjust infliction.

But there are two species of penal evils, which are represented as being inflicted on mankind here; first, pain and sorrow, and, in the second place, *moral incapacity*, an overpowering bias towards evil, a disinclination and an inability to good, naturally invincible. The integrity of God, and the equity of his government, demand that *human consciousness* should be conformed to things as they are, and should truly report the conditions of our moral action. We are conscious of possessing *a just balance* of moral constitution. Our consciousness is the only means

which God has given us of coming at this species of knowledge, and we cannot do otherwise than *believe* that our consciousness represents things as they are. In this matter it is the only interpreter between us and God. For its truth the Deity is directly responsible, and if we are deceived here, all ground of confidence in the Divine character is destroyed.

This consciousness is profoundly silent as to any previous existence, and as to any change in the moral structure of the soul, by which it has received a fatal bias to evil.

Large masses of mankind are taught that "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and pleasing to God, but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, *hath wholly lost all ability of will* to any spiritual good accompanying salvation."

Our consciousness, as at present constructed, is adjusted to the *former* state of things, and reproaches us, when we choose that which is evil, for having refused the good, which was equally within our power. If such a deterioration has taken place in our nature, that good was *not* equally in our power, *then this consciousness is a deception.* The change in our constitution *was not notified to our consciousness*, and therefore, if such a deterioration actually took place, nothing can exceed the unfairness and injustice with which we are treated by God. We are in a worse condition than the Hebrew slaves under their Egyptian taskmasters. The straw is withheld, but the tale of brick is not diminished, and

we are punished by the reproaches of our own conscience, without fault. Our condition is *worse* than theirs, inasmuch as they were punished with the consolation of knowing that they were not to blame, and we are punished unjustly, with the additional cruelty of feeling that we are to blame, when in fact we are not. We are deceived by the delusive consciousness of the possession of a power of which we have been deprived ages ago by the act of another, over which we had not the slightest control.

It is *impossible* for any one, sincerely entertaining these opinions in regard to God's treatment of mankind, *to believe in his paternal character*, or to feel towards him as a Father. The *declaration* of a Being who has done such acts, even were we sure that we had it, *is not reliable*, for a Being who had deceived us in our *consciousness*, would not hesitate to deceive us in a *revelation*.

The highest exhibition of parental love is the best possible care of the *moral* welfare of its children. The infliction of *total moral incapacity* on the unoffending is the strongest possible manifestation of parental *unkindness*, and to an immortal being, who must suffer *for ever* the penal consequences of unavoidable transgression, renders all other good gifts comparatively unimportant. Especially so is it, if that moral incapacity is not notified to the consciousness, and we are made just as unhappy by wrongdoing as if the moral balance of our constitution had never been destroyed.

They cannot regard God as a Father, who believe that *he has exempted a part of the human race* from this moral incapacity by arbitrary election, and con-

ferred on them afresh the power to will and to do that which is right and pleasing to God. A father, who has the attributes of a father, cannot be partial, cannot be arbitrary, cannot be unjust. These are the attributes of a tyrant, and not of a father. He who attributes such actions to God, makes him a tyrant, and not a Father. It is possible for mankind to entertain such opinions of God, and still worship him as God. The heathen worshipped just such gods. And their piety differed from true piety, just as much as their gods differed from the true God. *Fear* must predominate in all such worship. There cannot be full confidence, and, of course, not entire surrender of affection.

Our Saviour has given a form of prayer, to be used indiscriminately by all mankind, which recognizes the paternal character of God. *All* are taught to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven." Now this prayer, to be sincerely used, must be accompanied by the conviction that it corresponds to facts, and that God *is* the Father of all, in the sense of making the best possible provision for their moral welfare.

God is *not* a Father to the non-elect, from whom he withholds that agency which is necessary to restore their nature to that condition in which it is possible for them to will and to do that which is pleasing to him. Those alone have a Father who are reinstated in this condition. The rest are orphans and outcasts. They have a Creator and a Sovereign, but not a Father. He has withheld from them the highest manifestation of parental care, the power to will and to do that which is right.

Those who maintain God's sovereignty, in this

sense of arbitrary election, must do so at the expense of his paternal character, and render the use of the Lord's prayer by the non-elect impossible or insincere. A good father does *nothing* on the ground of mere sovereignty and arbitrary will. He is *always* moved by reason, by justice, and by love.

They cannot regard God as a Father, who believe *the heathen*, from whom God has been pleased to withhold a supernatural revelation, *to be in a state of inevitable perdition* on account of this neglect. Their ultimate moral welfare is of course wholly neglected. No man can deny that God *might* have given all mankind a miraculous revelation, if he had chosen to do so. If a miraculous revelation were indispensable to fit them for the happiness of the future world, they could not be justly excluded from that happiness, because God neglected to give them a revelation. God is *not* a Father to the heathen, in the highest sense, if he withholds from them that which is indispensable to their highest welfare.

It is not inconsistent with God's paternal character to give his children *different degrees of light*, provided that each is held accountable only for the light which he has, and provided, moreover, that *all* have sufficient light and liberty to enable them to secure the highest end of their being. But to create beings immortal and responsible, and then withhold from them the light and liberty which are necessary to enable them to meet that responsibility, is wholly inconsistent with the paternal character.

They cannot regard God as a Father, who maintain *that the special influence of his Spirit is necessary to fit the soul for future happiness*, and that he with-

holds it from any individual of the human race. If the theory of religion be true at all, then the highest end of man is *religious perfection, obedience to God, virtue, holiness.* God, as a Father, is bound to provide that the attainment of this perfection shall be within the power of all. Human nature, just as God makes it now, is capable of attaining this spiritual perfection, or it is not. If it is not, then God has not done a parent's part in the very construction of our natures. He has not provided for our highest welfare by making our faculties commensurate with the highest end of our being. If by the superadded influences of his Spirit, granted to a portion of mankind, he supplies this constitutional defect of our nature, to them he is a Father, by doing precisely what a fatherly care demands. But to the rest he is *not* a Father. He has abandoned them to a spiritual orphanage. They have a Creator, a Ruler, an arbitrary Sovereign, but not a Father. They cannot pray, "Our Father who art in heaven." Their Father has denied them those original endowments which are the conditions and the instruments of their highest welfare. Heaven, the home of God's children, is shut against them for ever.

If human nature, just as God now makes it, *is* capable of attaining that spiritual excellence which fits it for heaven, the Spirit of God, or Divine influence, must be interpreted to mean something which is granted to *all*, or is at least accessible to all. It cannot be an arbitrary or a partial gift.

In opposition to all these inconsistent appearances, in contradiction to all these hypotheses, Jesus uniformly inculcated the doctrine of *the universal pater-*

nity of God, — that he is a Father to all. To him, the spiritual welfare of the humblest of the human race is infinitely precious. "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." "Even so, it is not the will of my Father which is in heaven, that *one of these little ones* should perish." It is a truth of unspeakable importance, but one which mankind are exceedingly apt to distrust or forget. The want of this conviction gives occasion to some of arrogance and oppression, and to some of repining and despair. It is necessary to all, as the ground of confidence, of steadfastness, and fidelity.

In the parable of which the text makes a part, there are clear implications which go far to obviate and explain away the difficulties with which the doctrine of God's paternal character has been encumbered.

In the first place, *in relation to free agency.* The phenomena which seem to be inconsistent with the paternal character of God spring chiefly from the endowment of free agency. There are reasons for believing that the moral disorders of the world owe their being not to any deficiency of power, wisdom, or benevolence on the part of God, *but arise from the intrinsic nature of free agency itself.* This appears from the fact, that, in the grand operations of physical causation, the results are *unerring*, and know *no* miscarriage or defeat. The earth for countless ages has revolved round the sun with mathematical precision. The seasons return in their primitive order, the vegetable creation observes its original laws. The irrational animals obey their instincts, by which the individual and the species are preserved.

Disorder begins when we ascend to the sphere of *human beings*, into which a new element is introduced, that of *free agency*. There too we find law, but likewise aberration from law; there we first find sin, and suffering, which is the consequence of sin.

Now since God is omnipotent, as well as omniscient, we cannot suppose that it is in consequence of any want of power or wisdom on the part of God, that there should be moral disorder in the life and conduct of man. His omnipotence might have controlled the human will, in all cases, as easily, to say the least, as he controls the motions of the physical universe. But *that uniform control*, producing uniformity of action, *would*, by the very conditions of the case, *have destroyed free will.*

Since, then, *disorder begins when free agency is introduced*, we have reason to believe that this disorder is *incidental* to free agency, and to that latitude of action which free agency requires. Virtue consists in the free choice of good, when evil was equally in our power. Where the balance must be so exact between good and evil, it is to be expected that a being of imperfect wisdom and self-control will *sometimes* choose wrong. Any restraint which would take away the possibility of sin would destroy all merit in right choice. An immediate, mechanical force, exerted on the will of man, such as God exercises on the physical universe, would destroy all moral character in the volition produced. We have reason, then, to conclude *that the moral evil there is in the universe is the price which moral beings pay for the moral good, the virtue and holiness, there are*

in it. We cannot have one without some measure of the other. Man is made capable of sin, not that he *may sin*, and, forming a habit of sin, may settle down into a sinful character, but rather *that his good actions should have merit in them.* Care is rather taken that he should *not* settle into habits of sin, by the suffering which follows, and he is induced to settle in habits of virtue by the happiness it causes.

Although, then, God exercises no *immediate* or *mechanical* control over the will of man, it does not follow that he has left the human mind lawless and uncontrolled. He governs it still, but by laws which are adapted to its nature and are consistent with moral freedom. The character is not fixed, either in good or evil, *by one act.* It is capable of *change*, of being warned by experience and encouraged by enjoyment, or, in other words, *capable of the discipline of rewards and punishments.* This is the very discipline which is going on in this life.

The existence, then, of moral evil in the world, is *not* inconsistent with the paternal character of God. It is incident to the freedom of the human will, to that endowment by which man is raised above the irrational animals and assimilated to God. And man is made free, not that he may do evil, but that he may freely and meritoriously do good. All that is good in his choice is so much absolute gain, and the evil is not without remedy, for God has made man capable of *repentance* and *reformation*, and the chief instrument in bringing about that repentance and reformation is the *suffering* which he has made to be consequent on sin.

The fundamental truths relating to this subject

are shadowed forth in the parable from which the text is taken. A man has an hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away. The wandering away is incidental to the nature of a sheep. It is an *animal*, and not a tree or a stone. It is capable of locomotion, but not endowed with mind and guided by reason, and therefore *liable to go astray*. But there is a *Shepherd* to seek it out and bring it back. So it is incident to the free will of man, not being guided by perfect wisdom and perfect self-control, to go wrong. But the discipline is already appointed and arranged by the great Shepherd to bring him back.

But it may be said, Are not the heathen in a state of orphanage? Is their moral welfare cared for? Is the highest good of their being within their power of attainment? Our Saviour tells us, Yes. "Many shall come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." And the reason is given by Peter: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."

The declaration of Christ is equivalent to the assertion, that the happiness of the future world is within the attainment of all mankind. In other words, *God is a Father to all*, in providing for their highest welfare. The sentence quoted from Peter's speech to Cornelius involves the position, that the difference between the condition of man with and without a revelation is of the enjoyment of more or less light, not of the possibility or impossibility of

final salvation. The difference between the light of nature and revelation is in *quantity*, not *quality*; the truths made known by them are not different, but the same, only with greater or less amount of clearness and evidence. The heathen knows enough of God to constitute a sufficient motive of moral action, and of duty to know what is pleasing or displeasing to God. In the language of Paul, "He hath not left himself without witness to any nation." "For the invisible things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." His will is made known to them in the law of conscience. As the same Apostle says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another."

It may be objected to this, that the heathen go into a future state in a lower spiritual condition, on an average, than those who have enjoyed a miraculous revelation, and are of course prepared for a less degree of enjoyment. It may be answered, that the parable of the talents precisely covers the case. "From those to whom much is given, much shall be required." He who has gained two talents with the original gift of two talents, is just as meritorious as he who had received five talents and had gained five talents more. Both are bidden welcome to the joy of their Lord.

In estimating the prospects of the heathen in the

future world, we are to take into view the fact, that the actual spiritual condition of the soul is not to be taken as the measure of personal merit. Spiritual condition is *absolute*, *merit is relative*, and is measured not by results alone, but by endowments and opportunities. Endowments and opportunities *diminish* the merit of the very excellence they enable a man to attain. In a heathen, a much lower degree of excellence may be more meritorious than a much higher one under Christian light and influences. Socrates may have been more meritorious in the sight of God than a majority of Christians, because he reached a sublime height of virtue under the mere light of nature.

So, on the same principle, God is *our example*, and we are commanded to be "followers of God, as dear children," and to "be perfect, as our Father who is in heaven is perfect"; but he cannot justly be made *our measure*, for he is infinite and we are finite. He is omniscient and self-sufficient. He is incapable of temptation. He cannot err and cannot sin. We commence our career at nothing, in utter weakness and ignorance, and let our progress be never so direct and never so rapid, we cannot have advanced far toward perfection before we are overtaken by death. In the mean time, we are constantly liable to error and sin.

So Christ is *our pattern*, and we are commanded to walk in his footsteps, but he is not *our measure*. If he were, as some suppose, an incarnate, pre-existent spirit, and brought to this world the experience and the wisdom of other worlds and countless ages, he was not in the category of humanity, and the

temptations to which humanity is exposed were no temptations to him. They were not proportioned to his strength. If he were simply human at his birth, the endowments he received at his baptism, to fit him for his great office, lifted him out of the category of *mere* humanity, *in respect to temptation*, just as much as a pre-existence. If the words of the New Testament are reliable as history, after this period he had *a degree of knowledge* which is incompatible with the strength of temptation by which ordinary men are beset. What to us, in regard to God, is *faith*, to him was *certainty*. We *believe* in God; he *knew* God. To us God's presence is *insensible;* to him it was *sensible*. To us the existence of a spiritual world is a matter of *rational probability;* to him it was a *present reality*. We cannot see into futurity. A dark veil conceals from us all coming events, and all beyond the grave is wrapt in impenetrable obscurity. He saw into futurity and was aware of approaching events, and that tomb which is to our eye an everlasting prison, when he was about to enter it, was to surrender him on the third day to an immortal life.

Possessing such knowledge, sustained by such aids, and operated on by such motives, he lived a life on earth more divine than human. But *the absolute merit* of that life is a totally different thing *from its perfection*. That none of his followers have attained to it, does not exclude them from his kingdom and a share in his glory, because they too may have lived according to the measure of their light. No more ought the deficiencies of the heathen world to shut them out of the future happiness bestowed

on Christians, if those deficiencies have been occasioned, not by their unfaithfulness to their light, but the imperfection of the light itself.

Beware, then, how ye despise one of these little ones, even the heathen, whom ye imagine to be the orphans of God. "It is not the will of your Heavenly Father that *one* of these little ones should perish." He who watches the sparrow's fall, and clothes the lilies of the field, does not neglect the spiritual interests of those whom he has made immortal. There is a light, emanating from the very centre of the Divinity, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. *God has made every human being in his own image;* that image makes every human being a child of God, gives him spiritual wants and interests, which he who created them is bound by paternal obligations to supply.

To every human being God reveals himself in his works, in the deductions of reason, in the admonitions of conscience. *Every human being feels himself to be in a state of probation.* He who does what he knows to be right, is as confident as he is of his own existence that he secures the approbation of God. And he who does wrong is equally impressed with the conviction, that he did not escape the notice of the All-seeing Eye, and somewhere, in time or eternity, that wrong shall return to him, and no power can deliver him from the dreadful expiation. To lead him to good, and to restrain him from evil, his first years are passed under the plastic discipline of parental affection. A watchfulness grows out of it, rendered more careful by the motives of interest, because, if the child goes wrong, the parent is the

first to suffer. Then comes the influence of public opinion, or the universal conscience of the whole community; then comes the moral education of universal language, which is the natural Scripture of the human race, written by that universal inspiration which has given all men understanding. These are the indisputable evidences of God's parental care of the obscurest individual of the human race.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

ASK, AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN YOU; SEEK, AND YE SHALL FIND; KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU: FOR EVERY ONE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH; AND HE THAT SEEKETH FINDETH; AND TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH, IT SHALL BE OPENED. OR WHAT MAN IS THERE OF YOU, WHOM IF HIS SON ASK BREAD, WILL HE GIVE HIM A STONE? OR IF HE ASK A FISH, WILL HE GIVE HIM A SERPENT? IF YE THEN, BEING EVIL, KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS UNTO YOUR CHILDREN, HOW MUCH MORE SHALL YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN GIVE GOOD THINGS TO THEM THAT ASK HIM?—Matthew vii. 7–11.

In immediate connection with the paternity of God, Jesus taught the doctrine of *the duty and the efficacy of prayer.* One is the natural consequence of the other. If we are the children of God, and God has a Father's heart, he must hear and answer our prayers. Christ did not stop here. He encourages us to use *importunity* in our prayers. "And he spake a parable unto them, to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while:

but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him? I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily."

The facts here are specific, but the conclusions to be derived from them are universal. The principle involved in the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer is, in philosophical language, this. Religion is a *subjective*, as well as *objective* reality. Not only are there *objects out of us* to which religion refers, but there are *faculties within us* which correspond to those outward objects, and those outward objects are intended to bring into action those internal faculties, and by their joint operation human happiness and perfection are promoted.

In other words, God has given to man a peculiar constitution; he has bestowed on him a *religious nature*, which leads and enables him to recognize the existence of God, to act with reference to him, and to be benefited by such action. To the inferior animals, no such nature or faculties have been granted. God takes care of them without their knowing it. They know nothing of God, and are never called on to act in reference to him. God gives them *immediately* all the enjoyment of which their natures are capable, and nothing that they can intelligently do will add to their satisfaction.

But in the constitution of man, God has *added* to a mere animal constitution an *intellectual*, a *moral* and *religious* nature. God has so constituted man

as to have a *conscious* relation to himself. *Reason* teaches every man that there is a God, for reason teaches that there cannot be an effect without a cause; and as we are created, we must needs have a Creator. *Conscience* makes us aware, not only that there is a God, but that he sustains a near and personal relation to us. We could not distinguish good from evil, did not God give us the faculty of perceiving the difference, any more than we could distinguish colors without eyes. With the consciousness of freedom, we feel bound to choose the good and refuse the evil. If we do otherwise, we feel that we are not only unwise and imprudent, but that *we are guilty in the sight of God.* We cannot separate conscience from God. We cannot do right without feeling that God approves us, nor wrong without feeling that we have rendered ourselves obnoxious to his displeasure.

The persuasion that there is a God, is accompanied by the conviction that he is a *person*, to whom we sustain personal relations. *Personal relations are always attended by feeling and emotion.* This is a law of our nature. We cannot think on God, without some degree of emotion. Emotion, when it rises to a certain degree of intensity, demands *expression*, and breaks out into words and actions.

Hence the universality of worship. Hence the fact, that there has been no tribe nor nation discovered on the face of the earth, without some form of religion, without some mode of expressing their feelings to that Power whom their reason compels them to regard as the Author of all things. As it is beautifully expressed by Paul, in his speech to the idola-

ters of Lycaonia, "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness."

Worship, then, is natural, instinctive, universal, *because God has made man a religious being*, and revealed himself to him through creation and providence. One branch of worship is *prayer*. And this is just as instinctive as adoration and thanksgiving. We naturally ask of God that which we intensely desire.

There is a striking instance of this in the history of Polybius, a Greek and a heathen, who lived about two hundred years before Christ. He is writing an account of the invasion of Italy by Hannibal. That general had passed the Alps, and was wholly surrounded by his foes. Nothing remained for him and his army but conquest or death.

In order to impress the fact upon his soldiers, and to make them fight with desperation, he devised the following contrivance, which was so shocking, so cruel and barbarous, that it seems scarcely credible in a Christian land, and in this age of comparative civilization and humanity.

"But Hannibal and Publius, as they approached each other, endeavored severally to animate their troops by all the motives which the present conjuncture suggested to them. Upon this occasion, Hannibal contrived the following expedient. Having assembled all the forces, he brought before them the young prisoners, whom he had taken among those barbarians which had disturbed his march across the *Alps*. With a view to the design which he now put

in practice, he had before given orders that these wretches should be treated with the last severity. They were loaded with heavy chains, their bodies were emaciated with hunger, and mangled with blows and stripes. In this condition he now placed them in the midst of the assembly, and threw before them some suits of Gallic armor, such as their kings were accustomed to wear when they engaged in single combat. He ordered some horses also to be set before them, and military habits that were very rich and splendid. He then demanded of the young men, which of them were willing to try their fate in arms against each other, on condition that the conqueror should possess those spoils that were before their eyes, while the vanquished should be released by death from all his miseries. The captives with one consent cried out, and testified the utmost eagerness to engage. Hannibal then commanded that lots should be cast among them, and that those two upon whom the lot should fall should take the arms that were before them, and begin the combat. When the prisoners heard these orders, *they extended their hands towards the heavens, and every one most fervently implored the gods that the lot to fight might be his own.*"

Here was exhibited, by these poor savages, the genuine, inherent, unsophisticated religious instinct of human nature; those outstretched arms expressed the conviction, first, that there is an intelligent Power above us, by whom the universe is controlled, from the greatest to the minutest events, and, secondly, *that that Power is accessible to prayer.* The question is, Does this universal instinct correspond to facts, or is

it a mere superstition, based on no solid facts of God's government of the universe? Do those who pray obtain anything more than those who neglect it altogether? Jesus Christ, as our authoritative teacher, has decided this in the affirmative. "He that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

There is a natural probability that prayers are availing, arising from the strength and universality of the instinct of prayer. As God is the creator of all things, he must have created this instinct in man. All other instincts in man correspond to *realities*. A God of truth could not have constituted the universe in any other way than in correspondence with the natural instincts of man. If prayers are unavailing, then the instinct of prayer corresponds to no reality, and is in its nature *deceptive*. It is at least wholly useless, it is a superfluity, not to say a mockery of human helplessness. It is a false representation of man's relation to God, and the natural belief in the efficacy of prayer, on which the act of prayer is founded, is a *misconception*, of which God is the author.

The ground upon which Christ himself puts it is in itself a highly probable ground, independently of his authority, and that is, *God's paternal relation to man*. God is proved to be the Father, and man the child, by the fact that everything in the world is subordinated to human good. Human happiness is the end, and all outward things and events are the means. God, of course, must be predisposed to grant the desires of his children, inasmuch as the gratification of a desire produces happiness, and God desires *human* happiness.

But then there must evidently be a limit to this, for, man's knowledge being finite, he cannot know what will be for his good on the whole. God must refuse to grant man's requests sometimes, for his own good, and hence the deficiency of evidence that prayers are efficacious, arising from the necessity there is of denying a large part, perhaps a great majority, of human petitions.

Besides, each human being does not inhabit the world alone. The granting of his petition may injure another. The rain for which one man prays, to perfect his harvest, may destroy the harvest of another, which is ready to be gathered. It may still be to him a religious and a beneficial act to pray for rain, though his request be denied, if he subjoins, as did the Saviour, on making a specific petition, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Hence the necessity of general laws. God must govern the universe by a *plan*, which is best on the whole, and which adjusts conflicting interests as far as they can be adjusted. The chance that any specific desire of man shall coincide with God's general plan is small, and hence the apparent inefficacy of specific petitions.

God governs the universe by fixed and uniform laws, not only for the sake of order, but for human good, to be the basis of human expectation and conduct. Uniformity of law is the ground of all human action. It is the indispensable condition of all human plans, enterprises, and industry. The fulfilment of *every* human desire would break up this order, and bring everything into disorder and confusion.

We cannot have both uniform law and special in-

terposition, or, at any rate, special interposition must intervene very rarely, or the general law will be destroyed. But the doctrine of law carried to extremes, so as to exclude all special interposition, ends in fatalism, chills all piety, and undermines all religion. The doctrine of special interference, on the other hand, when carried to extremes, ends in the weakest and most debasing superstition.

But it does not follow that a prayer is lost, and of none effect, because its petition is not granted. It may be that God has so constituted us, that, even when the request is denied, the very act of prayer *may beget in us resignation to his will*, and fortitude to bear the evil from which we pray to be delivered, or the privation of the good we hoped to obtain.

Thus our Saviour himself, when his crucifixion approached, prayed that the bitter cup might pass from him. But that request could not be granted, because it was a part of the Divine plan that the Messiah should suffer and rise from the dead. Yet the prayer in the garden was not lost. It contained a petition for resignation,—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"; and the prayer was answered, the resignation came. He rose up from that prayer changed, calmed, and strengthened. Before he was in a state of consternation and distress. "He was sore amazed and in an agony." After that prayer, the distress and the consternation are mastered, and from that moment till he expired upon the cross he never faltered for an instant, or fell off from that sublime self-possession which became the martyr to the truth and the Saviour of the world.

This opens a wide sphere for the agency of

prayer, without interfering in the concatenation of physical causes, *in changing the spiritual condition of the worshipper himself.* Every human soul is in itself a *cause*, an independent agent, capable of originating a train of action, and a series of consequences. It is capable, moreover, of *determining the moral character of that train of action.* It is capable, too, *of exerting a transforming power over itself*, of becoming pure in thought, word, and deed, or evil, corrupt, and malignant.

As each human being is an original agent, and puts in operation a wide-spreading combination and series of causes, the difference of influence upon human affairs exerted by one mind may be immense, either for good or evil. It *has* been immense, beyond thought or computation.

Now, by the constitution which God has given to man, *the most powerful spiritual influence which a man can exert upon himself is by the very act of prayer.* An act of prayer is necessarily an act of *faith*, "for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And that act strengthens the principle from which it proceeds. In the act of prayer, God becomes a present reality, just in proportion to the fervor with which we call upon him. It is a realization of the presence of God, and this constitutes the chief difference between a religious and an irreligious man.

The religious man does not confine his regard to God to the act of prayer. It enters into other things. The Father of spirits is not only the Father of the soul, accessible to its approaches at all times, and

ministering immediately to its spiritual wants, but he is the physical and moral Governor of the universe, and he administers all things according to that law which he has written on the soul of man. Such is the harmonious structure of the universe, that nothing can permanently prosper which breaks God's fundamental laws. He who maintains communion with God will maintain a sense of his presence, and a proportionate regard for his law. He will be saved from those rash acts and enterprises by which men bring ruin and destruction on themselves. He will choose such ends and objects as are consistent with God's government, and of course are attainable in the ordinary course of his providence, and will be productive of happiness.

Hence it is said in the Scriptures, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and the consummation, as well as the cause, of the depravity of the wicked man is, that God is not in all his thoughts.

So that the profitableness of religious worship is not only an ultimate spiritual fact, *but it can be justified on philosophical principles.* It is not only practically beneficial, but we can see the reason why it is so. It is so because God has so willed it, and made man by nature a religious being.

Another illustration which we have of the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer, in the teachings of Jesus, is in the parable of the Pharisee and publican. "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, *I thank* thee that I am not as other men are. .....

I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, *this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*"

Here, then, is a most important fact, bearing upon the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer. The publican went down to his house *justified.* From which the general law is deduced, that the sincere and humble prayer of the penitent brings *justification*, that is, restores peace to the troubled conscience, and reconciles the sinner to God, rekindles his hope of his favor, and alienates the heart from sin and its temptations.

There is no more important truth than this in the whole compass of religious doctrine. Sinfulness is universal. No man liveth and sinneth not. Is sin an ultimate and irremediable fall? Is there *no* recovery from its estrangement? Is there *no* restoration? Is there *nothing* that man can do to regain his lost tranquillity? Must the future *always* be clouded with gloomy anticipations? His case, thank God, is not so desperate. *A remedy is appointed in penitence and prayer.* Sinful man can be forgiven, and *know* that he is forgiven. If he be truly penitent, and come to God in the true spirit of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he shall go down to his house justified, restored to inward tranquillity and a sense of peace with God.

Such prayer is *experimentally* efficacious, and it shows that religion is a *subjective*, as well as an objective reality. Man is made for religion, and relig-

ion is made for man. Such experience shows that God is a *merciful* being. "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust."

The efficacy of prayer may be brought home to our constant experience. The Saviour has promised the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. This seems to be a vague, mysterious, indefinite, and, to some, unintelligible promise. But is it not interpreted to us every Lord's day, when we assemble for worship? Those who come here for religious purposes get the spiritual blessing they seek. They go from this place in a different frame of mind from that in which they would have been if they had stayed away, or been engaged in secular pursuits, in worldly literature, or trifling conversation. Their souls have breathed a freer, a more congenial, and a more invigorating atmosphere.

But suppose there were no voice of prayer, or hymn of praise, alternating with the voice of instruction, and the service were to degenerate into a mere theological lecture, or declamatory exhortation, would not the service be bereaved of its unction, — its edifying, consoling, and strengthening power? Would not the most worldly and unspiritual person who comes here go away unsatisfied, defrauded, disappointed? Behold, then, the efficacy of prayer, and consider how true it is, that God *always* gives the Holy Spirit to them who ask him.

There is another experimental proof, which is exhibited in each passing generation of mankind.

Worship takes place under even more impressive circumstances than in the house of prayer. *It is at the domestic altar.* There devotion is aided by the sympathies of natural affection, and the alternations of those joys and griefs, which the stranger intermeddleth not with. Those joys and sorrows lay open the heart to good impressions, bring it into the low depths of humiliation where the penitential psalm finds a touching propriety, or elevates it to that attitude of cheerfulness in which it responds to the joyful summons, "Praise ye the Lord."

It is morally impossible that such religious culture should fail of its object. We should scarcely believe that there was a God, if he failed to pour down his blessings where they are so constantly and so assiduously invoked. His promise never fails; his word that has gone forth shall never return to him void. Nothing is more certain, than that such spiritual sowing shall reap a harvest of an hundred fold. It is thus, by long and patient years of waiting on God, of continual and unwearied supplication, that piety becomes hereditary, and whole families are gathered into the household of Heaven.

Finally, we are directed and encouraged, not only to pray, but to pray to God *in the name of Christ.* "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it unto you." Is not this fanciful or fanatical? Was not God as accessible to prayer before the advent of Christ as he has been since? Would he deny to a sincere prayer a petition not made in the name of Christ, which he would have granted if the request had been made in that name? What has praying in the name of Christ to do with

the efficacy of prayer? Can any such distinction be sustained on philosophical principles?

This question finds its answer in the considerations already brought forward. I have already said, that those petitions only can be granted, *which are in accordance with the moral laws of God's universe.* The character, the teaching, and the whole purpose of Christ and his religion, were in exact accordance with the principles of God's administration of the universe. While our petitions are within the scope of Christ's spirit, they will be in coincidence with God's purposes, and will be such as God can consistently grant.

If they are asked in Christ's spirit, then the petitioner is in a proper moral condition to receive them without injury, if they are temporal blessings; and if they are spiritual blessings, they will be received of course; for the very fact *that they are strongly desired, and asked for in faith,* will bring them in all their abundance into the soul.

It is thus that the prayers of the Christian Church have been availing in all ages, and brought down the blessings of God upon the world. It is thus that the promise of Christ has been realized, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

DISCOURSE XII.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

AND HE AROSE, AND CAME TO HIS FATHER: BUT WHEN HE WAS YET A GREAT WAY OFF, HIS FATHER SAW HIM, AND HAD COMPASSION, AND RAN, AND FELL ON HIS NECK, AND KISSED HIM. — Luke xv. 20.

One of the first facts with which consciousness makes us acquainted is, that *we are free agents living under law.* Such is our imperfection, that almost simultaneously with the knowledge of a law, and of our own free agency, we become aware that *we have broken that law, and are sinners.* That consciousness is the source to us of unhappiness. It diminishes, not only our enjoyment, but our *capacity* of enjoyment.

That law we do not conceive of as merely an abstraction, towards which we can have no other feeling than simple regret. We instinctively refer the law to a lawgiver, with whom we have a *personal relation.* We have not only broken a *law*, but we have offended *a person.* We feel that we are not only chargeable with folly, but *we are guilty in the sight of God.* Our feelings towards him are modified by a sense of guilt. We fear his displeasure.

We dread the penalty he may rightfully inflict. The consciousness of sin is universal, and it is the great evil of this world. Of all the causes of unhappiness, this is the greatest. It weighs down the spirits, it destroys the peace, it subdues the courage, it clouds the prospects of mankind.

We are likewise conscious of *penitence*. We are filled with humiliation and regret. We pray to God to forgive us. But *does* he forgive us? *can* he forgive us? When we offend a friend, and repent and ask his forgiveness, we may receive from him *personal* assurance that we are forgiven. Our minds are relieved; our peace is restored; the record is, as it were, blotted out.

But how shall we receive such an assurance of pardon from God, "whom no man hath seen or can see," let our penitence have been never so sincere? God is not a visible person whom we may approach. To our prayer he makes no audible response. There is no visible smile, assuring us that we are restored. There is no pressure of the hand, conveying to us the persuasion, that there is harmony once more. I do not say too much when I affirm that the *assurance* of the Divine pardon is the deepest want of the human heart. The Christian recites, perhaps, the greatest article of his creed, when he says, "*I believe in the forgiveness of sins.*" The preciousness of the Gospel is centred in this, that it professes to be a message from that God whose form we have never seen, whose voice we have never heard, assuring us that the penitent are forgiven, their sins are blotted out, and their transgressions are remembered no more.

I propose to consider to-day what Christ has taught us, first, concerning the *certainty* of the forgiveness of sins; secondly, the *conditions* of the Divine pardon; and, thirdly, its *assurance*. Can God forgive us? On what conditions will he forgive us? Can we have any assurance that he has forgiven us?

I have already said, that the teachings of nature on this subject are exceedingly obscure. Some intimations are given us, perhaps, *in our physical constitution*. We violate, through ignorance or perversity, the laws of health. We wound or injure our bodies. By our imprudence we bring on us diseases. God's merciful character is certainly manifested in the remedial and healing process which at once commences. The broken bone immediately begins a special and extraordinary action of reunion. It is discovered by physiologists, that what appear to be acute diseases are rather efforts of nature to throw off some poison taken into the system, or to remedy some action, which, if permitted to proceed, would end in the destruction of life itself.

God has, in his infinite mercy, provided a restorative power in nature itself, so that suffering is often a warning as well as a remedy, to persuade us to retrace our steps into the path of duty, when we have forsaken it. Indeed, his patience and long-suffering towards us are most affecting to contemplate. The deepest researches into physiology end in adopting the language of the Psalmist: "The Lord is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever."

Again, we have some intimations of what God is,

in the structure of our own minds. It is the postulate of the religion of nature, as well as revelation, that "we are made in the image of God." We can conceive of perfection in no other sense than that which seems to us to be perfection. *Mercy* is a human attribute, without which no exalted human excellence can subsist. In man, it is considered not only hard-hearted and cruel, but savage and inhuman, not to forgive a penitent offender, when he asks our forgiveness. And the reasonable ground of this is, our common imperfection, our universal liability to err and to do wrong. It is mainly the same reason which in Scripture is said to prompt the Divine compassion: "*For he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.*"

In the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the forgiveness of sins is abundantly declared. Amidst the fire and smoke of Sinai, the mercy of God is not forgotten. "And the Lord passed by him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.*" The same doctrine is promulgated with greater emphasis in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel. "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. *All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him:* in his righteousness that he hath done shall he live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways *and live?*"

No promise of pardon and remission could be more full and absolute than this. "All his transgressions that he hath committed, they *shall not be mentioned* unto him." They are wholly blotted out for ever, and are as though they never had existed.

The same sentiment is found, with almost equal strength of expression in the one hundred and third Psalm: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Thus stood the doctrine of forgiveness at the advent of the Messiah. What modification did he make in it? None certainly, to obscure its distinctness, and restrain its freedom and universality. The parable of the Prodigal Son confirms it all, and gives it the greatest emphasis.

No greater shipwreck of every virtue can be described, than that which had been made by this miserable sinner and wretched outcast. Almost every virtue is described as having become extinct. He has forsaken all that is good, and has fallen a prey to all evil. He has wandered far from innocence; he has become the companion of the vile, and is polluted, moreover, with almost every vice.

But *all* good is not extinguished. All good *cannot* be extinguished in any human bosom. Conscience was not destroyed; moral sensibility was not dead. No man could feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin more keenly than the wretched prodigal.

No man was more fully aware of the excellence and the happiness of virtue.

The freedom of the will was not lost. Not only was the moral discernment left to discover what was good, but the power to choose it and to act in accordance with it, was retained. The change that took place in him was a change of *will*. "I will arise, and go to my father." That act of will was decisive of his fate.

You observe that the Saviour does not go behind the fact of the will. He does not say it was by the grace of God; nor does he bring in any foreign agency. He simply says, "He came to himself." That "himself," the man, the essential individual, had always been on the side of right. His course of profligacy had been a species of *delirium*, in which that part of his nature had obtained the ascendency which was intended to be subordinate. That "himself" had always been in harmony with the father from whom he had wandered. And as soon as he came to "himself," as soon as he began to reflect, and his real self began to act, he said, "I will arise, and go to my father." What he wanted was not *re-creation*, but *restoration*. To say that he wanted re-creation would have been a reproach to his Maker.

The point, however, at which we are now aiming, is *the fact of forgiveness*, that the father forgave him, *spontaneously, fully, and freely*. The truth most interesting to us, which is taught by this parable, is the *tenderness*, the *compassion*, the *generosity* of the father's heart. "When he was yet a great way off." There could be no coldness, no sternness, no offended

dignity, no wounded pride, no apprehension of endangered authority, but simply *parental affection*, the yearnings of a father's heart. There are no bitter reproaches; for what father could reproach a son who was already crushed by the reproaches of his own conscience, tortured with a sense of his own unworthiness, and humbled by the palpable fact, that he was a total wreck, mind, body, and estate?

Was not forgiveness under those circumstances the least his father could do for him? Pure benevolence desires to see no greater penalty inflicted on the sinner than the natural consequences of his own misdeeds. There is no satisfaction in his sufferings. The only solicitude in the parent's heart is the welfare of the erring and repentant child. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

The doctrine of the parable of the Prodigal Son covers the whole ground of this Discourse. It declares, in the most unqualified manner, *the readiness of God to forgive the penitent.* The remission of their sins is full, free, and complete. What a precious doctrine is this to the sinful children of men, to the conscience burdened with a sense of past offences, and trembling under the apprehension of the Divine displeasure! Of all messengers he is the most welcome who comes to us with the assurance of *pardon from God!*

But at the same time it ought to be said, that it is not the doctrine of this parable, that forgiveness implies a restoration to as good a condition as if there had never been a departure from rectitude; that

a sinful life, followed by repentance, is as good as a life of uniform obedience. The sinner is simply forgiven. The prodigal does not stand, and he ought not to stand, on the same level with the brother who had never gone astray. The prodigal's patrimony is gone, and there is no new division of the estate. "Son, thou art ever with me, *and all that I have is thine.*" The prodigal has nothing, and he has simply to begin anew, and gradually build up a character, and by a holy life to lay up treasure in heaven.

We now come to the *conditions* of forgiveness. These, according to the teachings of Christ, are two, *repentance*, and *the forgiveness of those who sin against us.*

Repentance is, in the nature of things, indispensable to forgiveness. It must be remembered, that the evil of sin consists not alone in the evil consequences which must always follow the violation of the wise laws of the Creator, the wreck of the physical constitution, and the confusion and disaster which are introduced into human affairs. It consists also, and chiefly, *in alienation from God*, a sense of fear and a consciousness of estrangement. This is a purely spiritual effect of sin, and it is perhaps the saddest and most destructive of human happiness.

The soul of man is made for union and communion with God, just as a human child is made to love its human father, and to derive the most exquisite enjoyment from that relation. This human sentiment is purely spiritual. It is independent of all material relations. The poorest man, when he takes his child upon his knee, feels as true enjoyment from the mere exercise of affection, though he is

only able to supply his daily bread, as the richest, who is able to provide his offspring with every luxury. And so the child, in the consciousness of loving its parent, and receiving in turn his well-merited affection, has a perennial source of enjoyment, wholly independent of the physical aid it receives at his hand. The worst effect of the misconduct of the child is *the bereavement of this affection;* and disobedience inevitably breaks it up. And there can be no effectual relief except in *reconciliation.* Forgiveness and remission of sin, on the part of the parent, would avail little or nothing for the benefit of the son. The main difficulty is the estrangement, and the estrangement is the effect of *character.*

Hence the absolute necessity of *repentance* as a condition of the pardon of sin. There must be a change of mind and character; there must be a conviction of error and unworthiness; there must be a restoration to the supreme love of goodness for its own sake; then there will be a capacity to love the father again, and not before.

Thus Christianity rests on the most solid and substantial philosophical basis. It is not a fanaticism; it is not a mere enthusiasm. It is conformed to the essential principles and the real condition and wants of human nature. It is a message of mercy and reconciliation from a holy God to sinful man. It finds man estranged from God by disobedience, and endeavors to bring about a reconciliation upon the only possible basis, that of repentance and reformation. It has met the wants of man as a sinner, in all ages since its promulgation. It has led men to repentance, and in that repentance they have found peace and reconciliation with God.

It may be added, that *the Gospel offers no new means of salvation unknown in former ages.* The only remedy for sin that ever was, or ever can be, is repentance and reformation. That is a change which must take place in *us.* Repentance itself reconciles us to God, because by the exercise of it we pass over from a love of sin to an abhorrence of it, and from an indifference to goodness to a love of it. We are thus restored to a communion with God, and are reconciled to him. This is in the nature of things, and remained unaffected by the advent of Christ.

The only change that took place was, that *Christ was the especial ambassador of God's mercy.* And to this end the first doctrine he preached, the first message he delivered, was a summons to repentance. "And from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." This was likewise the preaching of the Apostles after his resurrection. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." This was his instruction to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name* among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

It was this which constituted the Apostles the ambassadors of God's mercy and the ministers of reconciliation, according to the representation of Paul. "All things are of God, *who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,* and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ,

reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God."

The only other condition that is mentioned by Christ, on our part, for obtaining the Divine forgiveness, is that *we freely and fully forgive those of our fellow-men who have offended us.* And it is remarkable how strongly and frequently Christ has insisted on this.

In the first place, it is made a part of the Lord's prayer, that universal and perpetual manual of devotion. "Forgive us our debts, *as we forgive our debtors.*" And he immediately subjoins: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father also will forgive you. But *if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" He made this condition of the Divine forgiveness the especial subject of a most impressive parable.

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he began to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents; but inasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant, therefore, fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and *forgave him the*

debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredest me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. *So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*"

Such, then, according to Christ, are the *conditions* of the forgiveness of sins, — penitence, and the free and hearty forgiveness of those who have offended us. The terms are certainly reasonable. Pardon, without repentance, could do us no good. The evil of sin is subjective, and not objective alone. It is chiefly in ourselves, in that hostility to God and goodness which it produces in our own hearts. We want *reconciliation*, as well as pardon, and that nothing but true repentance can bring about.

In that humble state of mind which true penitence produces, we are ready to forgive those who have trespassed against us. And we are not in the re-

ligious, Christian attitude of mind, unless we are ready to forgive those who have kindled our resentment.

But it may be asked, Did not Christ teach that there was some other condition of the Divine forgiveness? Does he not connect the forgiveness of sins with his own death in such a manner as to make his death the *procuring cause* of the forgiveness of sins? Do not the New Testament writers make a condition of the forgiveness of sins, a faith in the efficacy of Christ's death to take away sin? Did he not say of the wine of the communion, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"? Does not John the Baptist say of him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"? Does not the Apostle John say, "And the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin"? Does not Paul say, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, *through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"?

The key of all such language as this is found in the application of certain phrases in these passages to certain facts, usages, and ideas of the Jewish ritual. "The blood of the new covenant" is an allusion to the ceremonies with which the Mosaic dispensation, which was called a covenant, was rati-

fied between God and the people of Israel. All public compacts and contracts were ratified, in ancient times, *by a sacrifice*, of which both parties partook. Often blood was sprinkled on both parties, with the same intention of signifying that the stipulation had the assent of both parties.

The ratification of the Mosaic institute is described in the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus, and is thus epitomized by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, *This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you.*" When, in allusion to this transaction, Jesus says of the wine of the communion, "Drink ye all of it: this is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*," — he does not mean to say that his blood *procures* the forgiveness of sins, but *ratifies the covenant*, or dispensation of religion, a prominent part of which is the commandment of repentance, and the promise of forgiveness.

And precisely so is it in the other case, in which Christ is called *a propitiation*. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." The word here rendered *propitiation* is *mercy-seat*. Hence the use of the phrase "set forth." It is all equivalent to saying, that "Christ is the mercy-seat of the new dispensation," that is, the symbol and pledge of God's mercy.

The origin of this allusion is, that on the great day of atonement, while the people were afflicting

their souls and praying without, the high-priest took a part of the blood of the sacrifice, and carried it into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it on the lid of the ark, as being the most sacred thing on earth, and the nearest representative of God, who was one of the parties to the transaction solemnized by sacrifice, that is, the forgiveness of sins. The blood of the sacrifice did not *procure* the forgiveness of sins. It was the penitence of the people. The blood was merely the *symbol* of that forgiveness.

And so it would not be agreeable to fact to represent that the blood of Christ was the *procuring cause* of the forgiveness of mankind. It was the seal of the mission of Christ *as the ambassador of God's mercy.* It was a testimony that the summons to repentance which Christ brought came from God, and that it was accompanied by his promise of forgiveness.

Finally, what was Christ's doctrine concerning the *assurance* of forgiveness? Can the penitent *know* that God has forgiven him, or have such an assurance of it as to give him peace? It is his doctrine, as it seems to me, that the true penitent *always* finds peace, just in proportion to the depth and sincerity of his repentance.

This doctrine seems to me to be taught in the parable of the Pharisee and publican, who wen up into the temple to pray. According to that representation, justification is an *inward*, and not an outward fact. It arises from the nature of things, and not from a conventional arrangement. True repentance is a matter of *individual, personal consciousness.* A man, if he knows anything, must

know his mental condition. He must know intuitively whether he is truly penitent. His restoration to peace must depend on this consciousness. There can be no self-deception in this. A proud man cannot have the consciousness that he is an humble man. An impenitent man cannot have the consciousness that he is a penitent man. He cannot have the consciousness that he is restored to peace. He cannot, in the language of the Scriptures, feel *justified.*

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house *justified*, rather than the other."

Such, then, according to Christ, is the nature of justification, such is the assurance of divine pardon, which is consequent upon true repentance. In addition to this, every Christian has the assurance of Christ, as God's ambassador. Everything miraculous about him confirms it, especially his resurrection from the dead. As it is expressed by Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Our assurance of pardon, over and above the peace which flows from sincere penitence, *is* commensurate with our faith in the resurrection of

Jesus, by which his especial embassage of God's mercy is confirmed.

Such was Christ's doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. Such was its certainty, such were its conditions, and such its assurance. It opens the way of salvation to the very chiefest of sinners, and leaves the disobedient and impenitent without excuse.

DISCOURSE XIII.

IMMORTALITY.

AND AS TOUCHING THE DEAD, THAT THEY RISE, HAVE YE NOT READ IN THE BOOK OF MOSES, HOW IN THE BUSH GOD SPAKE UNTO HIM, SAYING, I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB? HE IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT THE GOD OF THE LIVING: FOR ALL LIVE UNTO HIM.—Mark xii. 26, 27.

The cardinal doctrine of Christ and the New Testament is *the doctrine of immortality*, that our being is not extinguished at death, that the soul, the spiritual part of man, on its separation from the body, passes into the spiritual world, where it retains its consciousness and its identity, and is for ever afterwards incapable of extinction, and no more subject to death. This doctrine is agreeable to the natural convictions, impressions, and expectations of all mankind. It is not only a natural conviction, but a *moral sentiment*. There is an involuntary prejudice against that man who calls this doctrine in question. It is felt concerning him, that he has abdicated the highest honor of his being, and that for some reason, discreditable to himself, he has renounced the highest dignity of man. There must

be some *moral deficiency* which leads a man to judge himself unworthy of so high a destiny, or some *moral degradation or delinquency*, which makes a man afraid to meet the issues of a spiritual and immortal life. In Jesus there was no such bias, and no reason for it. His soul was ever in unison with the harmonies of the unseen world, and therefore he spoke of it with perfect serenity, as a fixed and assured reality.

He placed the doctrine upon the ground of *supernatural knowledge*, of *argument*, and of *fact*. On this ground it has rested securely ever since. Promulgated on this new and higher evidence, it became the main element of the moral power of the Gospel, by which it created the world anew, gave the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual in man a more fixed and decided supremacy over the animal than they had ever attained before, and brought down to earth the peace and the power of that heaven which it promised. The great peculiarity of the Gospel was, that "it brought life and immortality to light."

I purpose to-day to consider these three chief grounds of the doctrine of immortality as laid down by Jesus, *his own supernatural knowledge, the argument derived from the religious nature of man, and the fact of his own resurrection.*

There is nothing plainer to my mind, in the record of the New Testament, than the claim advanced by Jesus to *supernatural knowledge*, and the *consciousness* he displayed of possessing it. It is testified to by the Evangelists. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." That this knowledge was miraculous, and

was exhibited by Jesus as miraculous, and as an evidence of his divine mission, appears from what immediately follows: "Because I said unto thee, *I saw thee under the fig-tree*, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. . . . . Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

To the woman of Samaria he said: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; *for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.* . . . . . The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because *he knew all men.*" As an instance of this supernatural knowledge of the thoughts and characters of men, his conversation with Nicodemus is related, in which he speaks to his thoughts and purposes rather than answers his words.

"*Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;* but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, *Lazarus is dead;* and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." Here was certainly supernatural knowledge.

"This night," said he to Peter, "before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Such are the claims which Jesus made to supernatural knowledge, and, coinciding with facts, *they render probable the knowledge he claimed to possess of the spiritual and unseen world*, and of the destiny of man after death. When he said to the thief upon

the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," we have reason to believe that he, who could foreknow the time, manner, and circumstances of his own death, and could foretell his resurrection the third day, possessed a degree of supernatural knowledge not inferior certainly to the cognizance of that unseen state to which the soul of man passes when it leaves its terrestrial abode.

I now come to the argument. The argument is based upon a quotation from the Old Testament. It is there related, that Moses encountered a vision of a burning bush, out of which a voice proceeded which said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

As these words stand in the original, they are only the declaration by which Jehovah *identifies* himself with that being who, almost four centuries before, had revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In that sense, they would have no relation to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and could not logically be quoted as having any bearing upon that subject. That he was the same God who had once appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would not prove that they were now in being.

The source of the argument, in my judgment, lies deeper, and it seems to me to be this. In the spiritual relation which is recognized between God and the patriarchs, in virtue of which *he was their God*, immortality is implied. It lies in this: "*I am the God* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." In order to *have a God*, in the sense here intended, a being must possess a *rational*, *moral*, and *spiritual nature*, so as to *recognize* God's existence. The dumb, ir-

rational animals have a God in the sense of having a Creator, Provider, and Benefactor, but they know nothing of it. They have no conscious relation to him, and, in the sense in which the Saviour speaks, they have no God. They can form no idea of him, are incapable of receiving any revelation from him. They therefore are incapable of religion. They have no moral ideas, and are incapable of moral discipline. Beyond a certain limit, there is nothing in their natures *progressive*, either in knowledge, character, or enjoyment. The very *absence*, then, of a moral and spiritual nature, and any recognition of God, makes their whole being commensurate with this present life, and shuts out all expectation of immortality from our minds, when we contemplate their whole being and all its relations. We have no evidence that such a conception ever enters into their minds, or whatever in them takes the place of mind. A continued existence, to a being so constituted, is comparatively valueless. Their existence is not *cumulative* in its nature, and when it ceases, there is no reason to be given why it should be renewed, rather than that another being of similar nature and capacities should be called into existence in its place.

The *possession* of these very faculties and endowments, of which the brutes are destitute, *constitutes the natural probability of the immortality of man.* The gift of reason reveals to man a God, the things that are made make necessary the conception of a Creator and a belief in his existence. The knowledge of right and wrong is itself a perpetual revelation. Those qualities of actions reveal themselves to my

mind, not only without my volition, but against my will. I am conscious of possessing, by divine endowment, the power of *choosing* between right and wrong. I feel bound, by an obligation which I cannot explain and cannot resist, to choose the right and to reject the wrong. This sense of obligation is a *law* imposed upon me by the Author of my being. I cannot, therefore, avoid investing him with another character besides that of Creator. He is to me a *Lawgiver*, and I cannot avoid feeling my responsibility to him as such.

This responsibility is spiritual. It is independent of time and space, for God is a spiritual being, eternal and unchangeable. Our souls are spiritual, or they would not be able to apprehend God's spirituality. Our relations to God, being spiritual and independent of time and space, naturally lead to the conclusion *that our existence, as it resembles God's in its intelligence and spirituality, so it will be parallel to his in duration.* Its endowments certainly point to such a destination.

A being, then, who is capable of having a God, that is, of sustaining a conscious relation to him, *is formed for immortality in the very structure of his nature*, has indications of a destiny not to close with a few short years of an earthly and material existence, but to live on in a spiritual state, when all connection with the material world shall have been dissolved.

We are now able to perceive the force and pertinency of Christ's argument, that Abraham's capacity of consciously having a God was a reason for believing in his immortality, that is, his having

a religious nature was an argument for *his immortality.* God would not endow a being so highly, whom he had created to perish at death. If man were destined to perish with the brutes, he would have been created like the brutes.

Moreover, God had had *special communication* with Abraham. He had said to him, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." At another time, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Was there anything in Abraham's earthly life to correspond to this great and unlimited promise? and if not, can the Divine veracity be vindicated unless we suppose another and a spiritual life?

"Walk before me and be thou perfect." Here is a recognition of Abraham as a subject of law and obligation. He was bound to be perfect, cost what it might, not to seek for any present pleasure or advantage, but to seek to be perfect, to the sacrifice of everything else. Moral perfection has no immediate respect to any of the good things of this life, and though it generally leads to all good, yet it sometimes compels a man to renounce everything, even life itself, rather than prove false to duty. This command to seek for perfection was not confined to Abraham, but is the essential law of our moral nature all over the world. Its obligations are everywhere equally imperative. It extends up to the hour of death, and our last act may be to surrender life rather than prove false to duty.

If this life be all, what becomes of God's promise, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"? If Abraham ceases to exist, the promise

fails, and Abraham has sacrificed everything, even life itself, to a mere phantom of delusive expectation.

The fact, then, that Abraham is capable of having a God, that is, of being conscious of his relation to God, of acting with reference to the will of God, points him out as a being of a nobler nature than the beasts which perish, makes his nature incommensurate with the narrow confines of this present world, and makes the supposition of another necessary to restore the proportion between man's endowments and his condition.

So, on the other hand, that man has a God is a pledge that nothing will be left undone by that God which is becoming to his character as God; that he will bestow the reward he has promised, and therefore, as death sometimes intervenes, or is the consequence of a faithful adherence to duty, omnipotence and perfect justice are arguments for believing that the spiritual existence of man will be continued beyond the present life.

This, as I apprehend, is precisely the force of the phrase, " God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." It is as easy for God to *preserve* as to create. God would not suffer a being which he had made capable of having a God to perish, that is to say, *the capacity of religion is a pledge of immortality.*

This is a great truth, and it appeals to the reason of universal humanity, and in my judgment is the real ground of that firm persuasion of another life, which has pervaded all nations and prevailed in all ages. The question recurs at once, and is to my mind unanswerable, Why should God have created

man a religious being at all, if he had not destined him to immortality? The religious part of man's nature is incommensurate with our present state of existence, and with our present life.

The first quality which makes man a religious being *is his capacity of knowledge, his intelligence.* Without this, religion would be impossible, and immortality improbable. Man's intellect makes him a religious being, because it leads directly to the knowledge and recognition of a God. It leaves him no choice whether he will be a religious being or not. The world as it exists *forces* upon the mind the belief in a God. In the language of the Apostle Paul, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Now this capacity of knowledge is absolutely without limits. In the short life of man, it merely begins the career of expansion and enlargement. The object of that knowledge is the universe, which to us is infinite. The impediment which intervenes between the capacity of knowledge in man, and its object, is *death.* If death be literally extinction, then is that divorce final and complete. Human existence, so far as its capacities of knowledge are concerned, is an *abortion.* It is a bud which ripens into no fruit. It is a spring which is followed by no summer. It is a morning which opens to no day.

Hence the presence of a great and cultivated mind is felt to be a strong argument for immortality. It is a demonstration of the dignity of human nature, and of course of its preciousness in the sight of God.

Its destiny ought to correspond to its dignity, and the narrow bounds of this present short and imperfect life become too contracted to measure and confine its existence and capacities. And the multitudes who resort from age to age to the truly great man's grave nowhere feel on earth a greater confidence in the immortal destiny of man, or a stronger repugnance to the atheistic and irreligious thought, that such a mind has been extinguished in eternal night. They exclaim, in the words of Christ, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Again, man, of all terrestrial animals, is created with a *sense of duty*. Nay, duty is the *highest law* of his being. So strong is the feeling of obligation to do the thing that is right, that it is more important to his peace and happiness than anything else. It is this which constitutes man a religious being. This is the very meaning of the word *religious*, that is to say, *bound by a sense of obligation*. But in order to be bound, there must be something external to ourselves to which we are bound. Obedience to the law of duty is not merely an act of *prudence*, and its violation a thing to be *regretted*, like an event over which we had no control. There is a universal feeling, that we have not only been *unfortunate*, but *criminal*. We have not only broken a law, but offended a *person*. We have not only made a *mistake*, but have contracted *guilt*. So strong is our natural conviction of the personality of God. The law written on our hearts, and on all hearts, makes us believe in the existence of a *Lawgiver*.

We do not look alone at the immediate, the nat-

ural, and material consequences of our actions. We believe that our actions are written in the records of eternal justice, and, however long retribution may be delayed, it must overtake us at last. Much of the punishment of our evil deeds is purely *spiritual*, and has no reference to time and place. Retribution, in that case, implies and requires merely a continuance of being. *A complete retribution requires immortality.*

On the other hand, fidelity to a sense of duty implies a continued existence. From the very nature of the case, it involves self-denial and self-sacrifice. If it were a mere compliance with present inclination, it would not be compliance with a sense of duty. We comply with the requisitions of duty, not because we believe it will be self-denial in the end, but will be an infinite gain. And *why* do we believe this? Because we believe in God, an infinite, omnipotent, and eternal Being, who has pledged himself in the very structure of our nature to the remuneration of those who, in obedience to him, sacrifice inclination to duty.

But all this supposes that our own existence shall continue until this compensation shall take effect. The pledges implied in our moral nature would not be redeemed, if we were to make the sacrifices and then *cease to exist* before we could receive our promised reward. Such would be the condition of all good men in reference to the present life, if there were no hereafter. If death closes man's existence for ever, then the pledges of man's moral nature must remain for ever unredeemed. The sense of duty must be pronounced to be incommensurate with the

duration of man's being. The life of every good man, then, is an argument for immortality. That there is such a thing as pure, disinterested virtue in the world, is a strong reason for believing that there is a heaven prepared by God which shall be its appropriate reward. God, we are certain, *cannot* be the God of the dead. If he has suffered good men to die and to cease to be, he has abdicated the throne of God, he has failed to dispense justice, he has neglected to perform his promise, he has falsified the pledges of man's moral constitution, and the final refuge of man is in scepticism and despair. "God is the God of the living." *All* live to him, and all *must* live to him, whom he has made capable of complying with the requisitions of duty.

But man is not only a creature of intellect and of conscience, but likewise of *affections*. We have already shown that intellect and conscience are both incommensurate with the narrow limits of this mortal life. I shall now proceed to show, that the affections are no less so. The affections have for their object the preservation of our being, and the promotion of our own happiness while we are in possession of it. The first of the affections, whose effects we experience on coming into this life, is the *parental*. This is necessary for the preservation of our being, for we are born utterly helpless. It is the strongest proof of God's care for us. It is antecedent to any merit on our part. We are able at that period to give nothing but trouble and anxiety. Were it not for this spontaneous and unbought affection, we should perish in our very cradles. That

it is in the hearts of our parents, we owe to the special provision of God. And it is one of the strongest evidences that we have a God, and do not owe our existence to chance.

The existence of these affections, however, is not a valid argument for immortality, for they are shared by man with the brutes, for which there is no hope after death. There is one class of affections, notwithstanding, with respect to which the case is different, — those which spring up between the truly good. They have for their object a spiritual, an enduring and illimitable happiness, a happiness which grows with years, with experience, with the discipline of the joys and sorrows of life. It becomes most intense in the purest and most refined, and unites them together by such tender ties, that they make up the best part of existence itself. Those affections are the very life of life, and their loss constitutes the bitterest part of death itself.

These same affections, having embraced all good men on earth, mount upward to God, who is goodness itself, pure, unmixed, unchangeable, eternal. The happiness of a holy man comes at last to consist in a great measure in loving God. The highest language of devotion is to him no exaggeration. He says to God, with the profoundest sincerity and the deepest joy: "Thou art my rock, my confidence, my hope! In thee do I put my trust! Thy presence is the light of the world." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Are these affections mortal, and destined to perish for ever in the grave? God would not be God to those in whose bosoms he had bidden such affections to spring, and then defrauded them of their object by annihilating them for ever. "*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*" The spiritual nature and religious capacities of man, his intellect, his conscience, and his affections, are altogether incommensurate with this short and uncertain life. His nature corresponds to immensity and eternity. The law of *adaptation* intimates immortality to man. The Saviour, then, in his discussion with the Sadducees, appeals to the universal argument which pervades all minds, and, though it fails to express itself in words, underlies and sustains those convictions of a destiny stretching beyond this present life, which seem to constitute a species of universal, unwritten, unquestionable revelation.

The last ground upon which Christ rested the doctrine of immortality was that of actual and palpable fact, — "I am the resurrection and the life."

Facts have much greater power than arguments over the human mind. The natural course of reason is to generalize, to deduce general truths and principles from particular facts, and not to infer particular facts from general principles. Accordingly, the world was startled from its delusion of selfishness and its delirium of sensuality, not by the *teaching*, but by the *resurrection* of Jesus. It set Jerusalem in an uproar, which had been quiet under his preaching for three years. To have been witnesses of it

set the Apostles on high in the regard and the reverence of mankind. It clothed them with *authority* which men had never possessed before, and enabled them to convert, regenerate, and sanctify the world.

DISCOURSE XIV.

RETRIBUTION.

MARVEL NOT AT THIS: FOR THE HOUR IS COMING, IN THE WHICH ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE, AND SHALL COME FORTH; THEY THAT HAVE DONE GOOD, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE; AND THEY THAT HAVE DONE EVIL, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION. — John v. 28, 29.

In connection with the doctrine of immortality, Christ taught distinctly and emphatically the doctrine of *retribution;* that those who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

All terms, of course, in the New Testament, which speak of *judgment, acquittal, condemnation,* &c., are figurative and analogical. They are taken from human modes of administering justice, of convicting the guilty and discharging the innocent.

The Divine government is differently administered. *A system of retribution is interwoven into the nature of things.* The laws of God are *spiritual,* and execute themselves. To be vicious *is* to be miserable. To be virtuous *is* measurably to be happy.

There are, of course, impediments to each; there are hindrances to a perfect retribution in the present life. Death will remove those impediments, and a continued spiritual existence will necessarily bring about a complete retribution. Hence it is, that death and the day of judgment are spoken of in such close connection. The true character then will become known, the ties which connected the good and the bad will be dissolved. The good will no longer suffer with the bad the consequences of their vices, nor the vicious be sheltered from the consequences of their misdeeds by the society and compassion of the virtuous.

In announcing and establishing the doctrine of immortality, Christ at the same time announced and established the doctrine of retribution. But neither did the doctrine of a resurrection or a retribution *originate* in the teaching of Jesus. They were doctrines common among the Jews at the time of Christ, and for many ages before. Martha says to Jesus, of her brother Lazarus, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." This doctrine she did not first learn from Jesus, but had received it as a common doctrine of religion current among the Jews. Such a doctrine had prevailed as early at least as the writing of the book of Daniel. In that, it is said, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And it is remarkable how *spiritual* are the instruments of future punishment which are introduced into this early announcement. The punishment by hell-fire, which our Saviour adopts, was an

image introduced in an after age. The images of that early day were "everlasting life," and "shame and everlasting contempt." One of the young men immolated by Antiochus Epiphanes, as related in the Second Book of Maccabees, for his adherence to the Mosaic religion, addressed to him the following speech: "Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this present life; but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life."

But Christ taught as a doctrine *of revelation* that which before had prevailed as an opinion. "And *this is the will of him that sent me*, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." He announces this in his prophetic character. "This is the will of God."

But the Jews had held the opinions of immortality and retribution in connection with fundamental error. It was a saying among their Rabbins, which everywhere occurs in their writings, "There is a part for all Israel in the world to come." All Israel are sure of future happiness, let their individual and private character be what it may. But there was no salvation for a heathen, no portion in future blessedness, let his virtues be never so eminent. This grand error both Jesus and John the Baptist set themselves immediately to correct. It stood in the way of the preliminary message of John, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." The Jews, in their conceit, imagined that they had no need of repentance. They were of the holy seed of Abraham, and therefore they could not be lost. This mistake

he at once cut up by the roots, and admonished the scribes and Pharisees, Jews though they might be, "O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance; and *begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our Father;* for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And he closes with announcing the *opposite* doctrine of *personal, individual responsibility.* "And now, also, the axe lieth at the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

There is nothing, perhaps, in the New Testament which bears a greater verisimilitude than this passage. The images are rural, and appropriate to him who appeared in the desert, and was clothed with camel's hair, and fed on locusts and wild honey. The axe and the threshing-floor were the most familiar things to the inhabitants of the country, the barren and the fruitful tree, the wheat and the chaff, were the most impressive symbols of the righteous and the wicked, to an agricultural people, and the power and glory of the approaching Messiah are well set forth by him who has the power to baptize with the *Holy Ghost* and with *fire*, and to separate the *chaff* from

the *wheat*, to confer upon mankind new and higher degrees of spirituality and happiness, or to involve them in a misery more complete. In this new dispensation, no regard will be paid to race or nation; the personal and individual character will be all that will be considered. *Retribution*, then, was the main feature of the Gospel from the beginning, from its first annunciation in the wilderness by John the Baptist.

The doctrine of retribution is the main burden of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It is so in the largest and most generous sense. It dwells chiefly on *rewards*. It begins with large, affectionate, and liberal promises of reward. Christ preached no one-sided Gospel. He did not regard it as a mere instrument of police, or represent the main object of God's government to be to keep people in order. There was no ecclesiasticism in his exhibition of Gospel truth. Retribution was not a thing to be addressed exclusively to the sense of guilt, to the fears and apprehensions of mankind. According to him, it is God's pleasure *to bestow happiness* on his children, as far as they have fitted themselves to receive it. Punishment is his strange work.

Accordingly, he commences his preaching with the announcement of *blessings*, instead of the denunciation of punishments. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. . . . . Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which

are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, *for great is your reward in heaven.*" Here, then, the Gospel commences with the promise of a glorious reward in heaven. Retribution there is, not in the sense of threatening and terror, but of *consolation, hope, and encouragement.* And this is precisely what the toiling, suffering, frail, and tempted children of earth need, to sustain them in their daily trials, and to nerve them to their daily duties.

But as the discourse proceeds, a higher law of retribution is set up. Men are not to be rewarded for their good deeds unless the *motive* has been pure. Here is a distinction which the Mosaic code did not make, and which had never been insisted on by the saints and sages of the olden dispensation. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, *to be seen of them;* otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, *that they may have glory of men.* Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, *shall reward thee openly.*"

Here is the doctrine of retribution declared in a most stringent and impressive form. It lays the foundation of a thorough and spiritual virtue, of a

divine and not a mere human and ostensible morality. It proclaims a retribution as eternal as God, and as universal as his omnipresence; as certain as his all-pervading agency, and as secret as the consciousness of the soul.

The discourse winds up with a broader, though milder, statement of the doctrine of retribution. It is such a retribution as may extend no further than the operation of natural causes. "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

In this view of things, no change in the succession of events is supposed to take place in order to bring about a retribution, but natural causes are supposed to proceed according to the established order of the universe, and in that order virtue is rewarded and vice is punished.

As all causes contain the seeds of all effects, he who thoroughly knows all causes can infallibly predict all effects; so that *the annunciation of laws* and *the foretelling of events* become at last identical. All preaching is reduced to the one simple message of the ancient prophet: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit

of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

The *images*, in that case, in which future retributory suffering is bodied forth, become *accidental* and *conventional.* In the book of Daniel, the future happiness of the righteous is symbolized by the brightness of heaven and the celestial luminaries. "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever." The misery of the wicked is condensed into the significant expression of "shame and everlasting contempt." In after ages, the symbol of future misery became *hell-fire*, from a valley in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, where the offal of the city was thrown and consumed by a perpetual fire. The flames of this fire, gleaming through the darkness of the night, became a most impressive image of terror to those who beheld it. Jesus availed himself of these images, then familiar among the people, to impress upon them the spiritual realities of the future retribution. Hence "the fire that never shall be quenched," and "the worm that never dies."

In another part of the Gospel, Jesus draws still closer the bonds of obligation, and announces a more stringent rule of retribution. We are liable to be called to account, not only for what we do, but for *what we leave undone.* It is in the parable of the talents. There we are taught, that not only is a life of positive transgression sinful, but a life of mere uselessness and self-indulgence. We must diligently cultivate our faculties, and we must do good to

others. We are sent into the world for this purpose. We can do much good, both to ourselves and others. Not only can those do this who are highly endowed, but those of the humblest capacity; not only those who have five talents, but he who has two, and he who has one. Not only is this announced in the teaching of Jesus, but it takes hold on the human conscience as equitable and obligatory.

Life and faculties and the power of action are given us, not that we may idle away our earthly existence, not that we may immerse ourselves in pleasure, or take advantage of those around us, but to be up and doing while the sun of our day is above the horizon, to exercise and thus improve our faculties, and help those who stand in need of our aid. There is no human mind or heart that does not assent to these propositions as reasonable and just, and which does not acknowledge that, if man be a responsible being at all, there may be sins of omission as well as of commission.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents

came, and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

"Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. . . . . And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Such is the retribution which is to overtake mere unprofitableness. The law, at first sight, seems to be severe. But no one can complain of it as unjust

or unreasonable. Why should man be endowed like God, with God's own attributes of intelligence, will, freedom, activity, except that he may imitate God's beneficence in diffusing good and happiness on every side? It is the natural judgment of the human mind, "He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

But the law of retribution, as promulgated by Christ, is still more strict and exacting. Not only are we responsible for our actions, for what we do or leave undone, but for our *words*, for the mere utterances of our lips, which are but fleeting breath, an impulse upon the universal air, which dies almost as soon as it is born. "But I say unto you, that *every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." This is certainly carrying the doctrine of responsibility to a fearful extent. But can we reasonably object to it? Are not *words* equally the means of good and evil with actions? Can we not blaspheme God and slander men? Can we not propagate falsehood? Can we not with the tongue defraud men of their property, sap their principles, pollute their imaginations, and lead them on to sin and ruin? How much of the social evil which afflicts society is propagated by the tongue! And yet the tongue is under our control, and we are justly responsible for its use.

Not only so. Our Saviour has told us, that we are responsible for our *thoughts*. The voluntary indulgence of the appetites and passions to that extent, that we are hindered from their gratification by outward impediments instead of inward scruples, makes

us guilty in the sight of God. The will is as the deed.

Such is the stringency of the law of retribution laid down in the Gospel of Christ. And it might well fill us with despair, and lead us to cry out, "Who then can be saved?" The Gospel as law is more strict than the Law itself. It was in this sense, doubtless, that Jesus said of himself, that "he came not to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil," and to produce a practical righteousness more thorough and spiritual than Judaism had ever exhibited, or the world had ever seen.

And yet the Gospel is *not* mere law, a system of bare coercion, intended to keep mankind in order and secure the peace of the world. Such are the laws which human governments enact, to guard the community against the wrongs of the individual, and the individual against the oppression of the community. Such were mainly the Mosaic laws. "The Law," says the Apostle, "was given by Moses, but *grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ." The Gospel is a mingled system of mercy and spiritual truth. Into it the *paternal* principle is introduced, which tempers justice with *love*, which makes law not a stern necessity so much as a wise expedient, and its administration not so much an ultimate retribution as a remedial discipline. There is all the difference between the Law and the Gospel that there is between the magistrate and the father. And nothing in the New Testament is to be interpreted in such a manner as to conflict with the Fatherhood of God.

The overruling truth of the New Dispensation is

that *God is our Father*, and *our Father is love*. If this be true, law is made for man, and not man for law. Law has no further sacredness than as it promotes human good and human happiness. It is a rule of action dictated by the nature of things. It is not enacted to show God's authority, nor is it executed to vindicate his honor. It is addressed as a *motive* to influence the human will, to guide man along the path of safety to everlasting peace. *Justice*, as it is used as a theological term, is ambiguous and deceptive. It is said that God is a God of justice, and therefore he is *compelled*, in order to sustain that character, to punish every sin. Who or what compels him? Law is a means to an end, and is, of course, subordinated to that end. Human happiness can never be sacrificed to a law, without making the Deity the slave of an abstraction.

It would be injustice to withhold from a free agent the reward which has been promised to his obedience or his endurance. There would be a breach of faith, and a disappointment of just expectation. But there is no injustice in remitting a penalty. No person is injured by it. A good being will always remit the penalty, whenever the happiness of the transgressor will be promoted by it.

The justice of God, then, is the justice of a Father, and therefore all law and all punishment must be *disciplinary*. If God be a Father, and punishment be disciplinary, the consequence follows, that punishment must be *limited* in duration. Punishment, in that case, is not an *end* in itself, it is a *means* to a further end. Punishment must likewise be limited by the *justice*, as well as the benevolence, of God.

Guilt itself is finite, and admits of degrees. If the guilt of a small offence has a limit, as it must have to admit of one greater, then the great must have a limit too, and therefore cannot be infinite. Man is a finite being, and his faculties are finite. While here, he is in a state of comparative infancy. Nothing that he can do can merit an infinite punishment on the score of justice. Neither justice nor mercy can for a moment tolerate the idea of eternal, endless punishment. The most fiendish heart that ever beat in a human bosom could not demand or witness it. Accordingly, Christ taught, that "that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Many stripes must have an end as well as few stripes, or there can be no proportion between them. This passage, of course, is to be permitted to modify others, in which great length of punishment seems to be intimated, such as the following: "And if thy hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to be cast into hell-fire, that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

In the parable of the lost sheep, it is said of the shepherd, who represents God, "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, *until he find it?*" God is omnipotent, and can accomplish what he

pleases, and he is infinitely wise to select means which will carry out his purposes.

In making up our individual minds upon this subject, and individual opinion is as far as we can go, *all* the elements which relate to it must be taken into account. One of these elements is the character of God, which is fully revealed. God is our Father, and God is love, or is infinitely benevolent. He is omniscient and omnipotent, and has an eternity in which to accomplish his purpose. Man is finite and imperfect, and therefore cannot contract infinite guilt. Man is the child of God, and therefore God can never cease to desire his welfare, and pursue it. We have many passages of the Scriptures, which seem clearly to intimate, that all punishment, whether in this world or the next, has for its object the *reformation* of the offender. The mind of man is essentially and unalterably free; the only hindrance to its freedom is the slavery of evil habit. It must, therefore, ever be accessible to motives, and capable of repentance.

On the other hand, we have the capacity of man for sinfulness, corruption, and degradation. No human eye has ever seen the bottom of this gulf. Freedom being essential to the human mind, and, as far as we know, left inviolable by God, there is no calculating the orbit of its aberrations. The most unfavorable element in the estimate of the prospect of the speedy restoration of the wicked in a future world to purity and happiness, is the average result of earthly probation, and the general failure of the reformatory discipline of the present life to restore the vicious to stable virtue. *There is certainly great*

difficulty in curing a single bad habit. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil." "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded *though one rose from the dead.*"

Least of all is there any prospect in the sinner's path of expiating his sins by suffering, which ought to weigh a feather in relaxing the bonds of morality, or weakening the motives for seeking immediate salvation.

I cannot better conclude this discussion, than in the words of Southwood Smith, in his admirable treatise on the Divine Government:—"But it has been already shown, that the present system is adopted because it is on the whole the wisest and best. Future punishment is a necessary part of that system. What the actual amount and duration of it will be, we do not know. With undoubting confidence we may leave it to the determination of that wisdom which is absolute, and that goodness which is perfect."

DISCOURSE XV.

INTERPRETATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, THESE ARE THE WORDS WHICH I SPAKE UNTO YOU, WHILE I WAS YET WITH YOU, THAT ALL THINGS MUST BE FULFILLED WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE LAW OF MOSES, AND IN THE PROPHETS, AND IN THE PSALMS, CONCERNING ME. THEN OPENED HE THEIR UNDERSTANDING, THAT THEY MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES, AND SAID UNTO THEM, THUS IT IS WRITTEN, AND THUS IT BEHOOVED CHRIST TO SUFFER, AND TO RISE FROM THE DEAD THE THIRD DAY: AND THAT REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS SHOULD BE PREACHED IN HIS NAME AMONG ALL NATIONS, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM. AND YE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS. — Luke xxiv. 44–48.

I HAVE enumerated in the Discourses immediately preceding some of the principal doctrines taught by Christ. I have not, of course, exhausted this element of the New Testament, but merely shown that such an element exists. Next to doctrines, in the analysis which I have attempted to make, comes the element of *Opinions*.

By opinions I mean the impressions and habits of thought which were current at the time of Christ, upon subjects collateral to religion, which he did not

deem it expedient to criticise. Concerning these matters he did not consider it the dictate of wisdom to make issue with his contemporaries.

This distinction between doctrines and opinions is all-important, and must be made by the candid defender of the divine origin and authority of Christianity. In speaking of these matters, as they often came in his way,three methods of procedure lay before the Saviour, — to forbear all allusion to them, to attempt to correct the popular opinions, or to adopt the common modes of speech in relation to them without remark or comment. The first would have been impossible, as they came up every day and hour. The second would have involved him in perpetual disputes, and nullified the force of his other teaching. There was nothing left but to do as he did, — to use the common language of his countrymen, and leave to time and science the correction of those errors which were merely scientific.

This distinction becomes vital, when we apply it to *the interpretation of the Old Testament.* The Old Testament was almost the only literature which the Jews possessed. They were familiar with it, and could recite much of it from memory. The consequence was, that it came up to their recollection on all occasions, and was quoted on all occasions, with the remark that "the Scripture is fulfilled" by this and that event, meaning that there is a *coincidence* between them. There were likewise *prophecies* in the old dispensation of the new. But the Jews did not confine themselves to these. They interpreted many passages as prophetic which were not so. In reasoning with them, and endeavoring to give them truer

ideas, Jesus sometimes takes them on their own ground, and shows them what would follow on their own premises. He likewise quotes the Old Testament by way of *coincidence*. No fair-minded expositor of the New Testament will hesitate to make these concessions; and if he insists on classing such expositions under the category of Doctrine, he betrays his cause.

Much light, as it seems to me, is thrown upon Christianity, by considering it as one of a series of Divine revelations, progressive in their nature, and calculated to meet the wants of mankind in the successive stages of their advancement. First came the Patriarchal, then the Jewish, then the Christian; and each was so contrived as to be not only introductory, but preparatory, to the next. Each was an enlargement of the last, till Christianity, completing the series, was calculated to be universal and perpetual, to be coextensive with mankind, and to endure as long as time itself.

First came the Patriarchal. It was brief and simple, and adapted to a single family, or at most that family expanded to a tribe. The world was then in the pastoral state. It is very uncertain whether there were any cities of considerable size. The antiquity claimed for Egypt, when closely scrutinized, seems to me exceedingly apocryphal; and the king of Egypt with whom Abraham held intercourse seems much more like a petty chieftain than the lord of untold millions. The revelations made to Abraham were very short, but exceedingly sublime and comprehensive. "After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not,

Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." On another occasion: "I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect." It wants but a few moments' reflection to realize how impressive and comprehensive these oracles were. They embraced, in few words, all the essential elements of religious faith and duty, — the existence, the personality, the providence, and the moral government of God, the moral nature, the freedom, and the accountability of man. This was accompanied by the institution of circumcision, as a national characteristic, the command to give his offspring a religious education, the promise that his posterity should possess the land of Canaan, and that "in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed." The only social religious rite then was sacrifice; but that was not new in the days of Abraham. It ran back to the very beginning of the world.

And this revelation, this religion, this ritual, was ample for its purpose. Human relations, duties, and rights were then few, simple, and intelligible. No complicated system of laws was necessary, no extensive organization of magistracy and priesthood. Such was the patriarchal religion, and it continued from Abraham to Moses, a period of more than four hundred years. Its practical working, its literature, its theology, are portrayed in the book of Job. Historically, Job, as it seems to me, ought to come in between the books of Genesis and Exodus. Few are aware of the wide gap which intervenes between the last chapter of Genesis and the first chapter of Exodus, a period nearly or quite as long as intervenes between the last chapter in Malachi and the

first of Matthew, a period longer than has elapsed since the discovery of America.

During that period, vast changes took place in the condition of the world. Mankind passed from the pastoral to the agricultural state. The land of Canaan, over which Abraham had wandered almost at will, was appropriated by seven different nations. Cities were built in all directions, and population became comparatively dense. Egypt grew to a great nation, rich and powerful, and the invention of alphabetic writing put a new face upon society and the whole condition of man upon the earth. It made possible a fixed and permanent system of laws, and of course gave stability to all civil institutions. *It gave man the power to record, preserve, and verify a revelation from God.* No extensive revelation could precede the invention of writing, for tradition would soon so distort and interpolate any revelation, that it would no longer represent the primitive truth.

In those intervening centuries, the condition of the descendants of the patriarchs had changed as much as that of the world at large. They had increased from seventy persons to more than a million, from a family to a nation. In what intellectual, moral, and religious condition they subsisted through that long tract of time, we have no means of knowing. Their breadth of religious knowledge must have been very narrow, their rites very few, and their expectations for the future confined chiefly to the promise which God had made their fathers, that at some future period their descendants should possess the land of Canaan, and should be the instruments in the hands of Providence of blessing all the nations of the earth.

As to the person who was to be raised up to conduct them to such prosperity and happiness, they seem to have been left entirely in the dark. In the mean time, they were enslaved, and thus put in the way, not only to become physically strong and numerically powerful, but prepared, by a hearty disgust for the land of their bondage, to comply with the first intimation of Divine Providence that the day of their emancipation had arrived.

The instrument of their deliverance at length appears in Moses. And not only does God make him their leader, but their lawgiver and prophet, to teach them the principles of their religion, to institute their ritual, and establish the form of their civil government.

When it was completed, to what did the Mosaic dispensation amount? *Merely to the expansion of the patriarchal religion from the conditions of a family to the exigencies of a nation.* The theology was the same, the principles of human duty were the same. Religion must be essentially the same in all dispensations. It is to love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

The change introduced by Moses was mainly that of *outward organization.* Under the patriarchal form, the head of a family or tribe was magistrate and priest. He administered justice and performed sacred rites. The change introduced by Moses was, that the sacerdotal functions were delegated to one family, and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs to one tribe. Church and state were separated, and not suffered, as in Egypt and other countries, to coalesce into a crushing despotism. Idolatry was forbidden under the penalty of death, and various

articles of food were prohibited which were freely used by the heathen, in order to prevent the Israelites from mingling in the licentious festivities which always accompanied idolatrous worship.

The most material and significant institution ordained or received in the wilderness was the Sabbath. It is difficult to conceive how the Sabbath could have been of much use, or even have been observed, in the patriarchal religion, in which there were no temples, no synagogues, no law to meditate upon and teach to others, and no common rite, except sacrifice, in which to participate. But to the nation established in Canaan, the Sabbath was essential. It was a weekly homage to their heaven-derived law. It gave them leisure to acquaint themselves with their history, their traditions, and their religion. It gave them, above all things, an opportunity to give their children a religious education, and make them acquainted with all the *minutiæ* of their law.

For about fifteen hundred years that institution endured. It wrought its work, it accomplished its end. One nation was redeemed from idolatry and thoroughly imbued with the principles of the true religion. But Judaism of course could not be ultimate. It could never be the design of the Universal Father to confine the true religion to one nation. It must, of course, have been the design of God to impart this religion to the world, when the world was ready to receive it. And the promise from the beginning was, "In thy seed shall *all the families of the earth be blessed.*" The fulness of time at length arrived.

Between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of the New, a great change took place in the condition of the world; as great as had occurred between the closing of the book of Genesis and the opening of the book of Exodus. All the civilized world was united under one government, that of the Romans, and the Greeks had diffused their language, their literature, their philosophy, almost as widely, so that a spiritual religion might be propagated without let or hindrance from the Euphrates to the Atlantic.

When the time had come for the diffusion of the true religion over the earth, the instrument was provided to accomplish it; and that instrument was Jesus Christ. In that mainly consisted his great office and mission to mankind. Of that sublime function he seems to have been conscious from the commencement of his ministry, and he always alludes to it in the language of the loftiest emotion. The declaration of this divine purpose is connected with his first public and open avowal of his Messiahship. It occurred on the journey in his return from his first visit to Jerusalem. He paused for rest and refreshment at Jacob's well, near Sychar, a city of the Samaritans. A woman came out to draw water, and he accosted her and drew her into conversation. In the course of it he discloses to her his prophetic powers, and she takes the opportunity to propose to him the great question between the Jews and the Samaritans as to the right place of worship. He settles the question in favor of the Jews, but announces the fact, that the importance of that question was now at an end; for the worship of God, instead of

being confined, as it had been, to one place and nation, was about to be spread over the whole earth. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." The woman, hearing him thus discoursing of such high matters, and announcing in terms scarcely ambiguous the advent of a universal religion, is reminded of the Messianic expectations of the times, which were shared alike by the Jews and the Samaritans. "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

The consequence of this conversation was, that multitudes of the Samaritans thronged around him. At their invitation he remained with them two days, and many of them believed on him as the Christ. To the narrow prejudices of the disciples, this act must have seemed almost to be the extension of the Messiah's kingdom to the Gentiles, for not only had the Jews no dealings with the Samaritans, but they were more odious to them than even the heathen themselves.

That the extension of the true religion to the Gentiles dwelt much on the mind of Christ, would appear from the reflections which were suggested to him by the request of certain Greeks who were come to Jerusalem, at one of the feasts, to be introduced

to him. "And there were certain Greeks among them, that came up to worship at the feast. The same came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The presence of these foreigners seems to have suggested to him the thought, that the hour was now approaching for the great purpose of his mission to be accomplished, the extension of his religion to the Gentiles. And that could take place by no other means than his *death*. As long as he lived, he could be the Messiah of the Jews only. They could conceive of him in no other light than as the instrument of their worldly ambition, the means of spreading their theocracy over the world, with all its peculiar rites and ceremonies. The Jews, in crucifying Christ, then, may be said to have disappointed their own national hope. As he was no longer upon earth, he could not carry out their expectations. He was crucified as the Jewish Messiah to those who believed on him before. But he rose from the dead the Messiah of the world. He had promulgated his religion. It was purely spiritual. He had left out of it the whole ritual of the Jews. His resurrection was the ratification of the religion he had taught. His crucifixion was his own highest testimony to it as the faithful and true witness. His resurrection was the conclusive and un-

answerable testimony of God. Judaism, in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, was abolished by the authority of God, the same authority which had established it.

The functions, then, of Moses and Christ, though in some respects coincident, were in others diametrically opposed to each other. Much of the ritual of Moses was intended to raise up a middle wall of partition between Jews and Pagans, in order to fence out idolatry, and prevent it from overwhelming and destroying the true religion. But that wall, while it kept out idolatry, kept in the true religion, and prevented it from spreading over the earth. After the danger of idolatry was over, and the world was prepared to receive the spiritual principles of the true religion, then Christ broke down the wall, by abolishing the rites and ceremonies of Judaism, that the true religion might pervade the world. In other words, he preached the essential principles of Judaism, that is, of all true religion, without its rites and ceremonies. And this was the most essential part of his mission.

By these considerations we are enabled to understand some of the phraseology of Paul, which is otherwise exceedingly obscure. To the Ephesians he writes: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were

far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh."

This extension of the true religion through Christ to the Gentiles was the theme of Paul's perpetual wonder, admiration, and gratitude. It was the grand secret of Divine Providence existing in the mind of God, but concealed from mankind from the beginning of the world. Paul, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, was especially intrusted with the secret, as he writes to these same Ephesians. "For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given unto me to youward, how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel*, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of

his power, — unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the communication of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things, ... according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There seems, at first sight, to be a discrepance between the language of Paul and the language of Christ, in relation to the extension of his kingdom to the Gentiles. Paul speaks of it as a *mystery*, a secret which had been hidden in God from the beginning of the world, and Christ is represented as explaining to his disciples, after his resurrection, *the prophecies* or *the revelation of the fact* in the Old Testament, that "it was necessary that Christ should suffer death and rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations*."

This brings up a most interesting, but difficult subject, the subject of *prophecy*, the Messianic expectations of the Jews, and the *quotations from the Old Testament in the New*.

On taking up the New Testament, the ordinary reader immediately encounters quotations from the Old. Many of them are cited as *prophetic*, and are said to be *fulfilled* in events which then took place. On a recurrence to the passages in the Old Testament from which they are taken, there is often no appearance of anything prophetic about them. Some are historical, some devotional, and some are mere reflections suggested by passing events. The number

of these quotations is very large. In all, they are above two hundred and fifty, and, if placed together, would fill ten or fifteen pages of our common Bibles. Some of them seem to be quoted as proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus, which in their original connection can be made to bear that meaning only by the most forced and unnatural construction. The quotations are made, not by original translations from the Hebrew, but from the version then in common use, called the Septuagint, made into the Greek some two centuries before, and then well known among the Jews. And what increases the difficulty is, that wrong translations are sometimes quoted, and reasoned from as if they were the true sense. What are we to say to these things? Are they not enough to shake our faith in the New Testament as containing a revelation from God, an infallible rule of faith and practice? I answer these questions by saying, that the interpretation of the Old Testament in the New may be removed from the sphere of immediate inspiration and implicit faith, and placed in that of *opinion, custom, reasoning, and illustration.* I say, moreover, that it might be dangerous to place them in any other. No defender of the Bible gains anything by denying facts, or by giving such explanations of them as are wholly unsatisfactory.

Let us then consider what are the facts of the case. There are many passages in the New Testament quoted from the Old, with the introduction, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," which in their original connection are *not* prophecies, and are not even put in the *form* of

prophecy. For instance, Jesus says of Judas Iscariot: "I speak not concerning you all; I know those whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that hath eaten bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Now if we recur to the ninth verse of the forty-first Psalm, from which this is quoted, we find that it makes a part of a complaint of David of the treachery of some near friend. It would seem to be either a member of his family, or a frequent guest at his table, for he says: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." This is *no* prophecy in its original connection; it is a simple declaration of an historical fact. It is not a prophecy, it is not even in all respects a *coincidence*. There is a circumstance thrown in which prevents its being even a coincidence. It was David's *familiar friend*, in whom he *trusted*, who betrayed him. But Jesus never put any trust in Judas Iscariot. He says in this very connection, "I know those whom I have chosen." And one of the Evangelists testifies that "Jesus knew from the beginning who should betray him." How then did Jesus quote these words? They were evidently suggested to his mind by similarity of circumstances.

The Jews, and especially those who were religiously educated by pious parents, were thoroughly acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures. Indeed, they were almost the only literature they had. Josephus tells us, that a Jew could repeat his sacred books almost as readily as he could tell his own name. By the similarity of the experience of life

in all ages, it was inevitable that the laws of the human mind should suggest, on the occurrence of any remarkable event, some corresponding event or sentiment recorded in the Bible. That the mind of Christ acted in this respect by the natural law of association, would appear from the history of the Temptation. On the occurrence of the various suggestions of evil, those passages of the Old Testament occur to his mind which are calculated to meet and defeat the temptation.

The very general manner in which Christ quotes the Old Testament may be learned from his conversation with the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew. "Ye hypocrites," said he, "well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." This is a quotation from the thirty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, and is an address to the people of his own day. It is a prophecy in no other sense than that the scribes and Pharisees were the descendants of those ancient Israelites, and what was declared of them as an historical fact precisely fitted the case of their descendants hundreds of years afterwards.

The same remarks are applicable to the quotation in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, made from the sixth of Isaiah. "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is

waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

In the sixth chapter of Isaiah, this is a special and direct message of God to the Israelites of that day, for the prophet begins by telling how he came to be specially charged with it. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go and tell this people."

It is only by the most liberal construction of Christ's language in regard to prophecy, that we are able to escape palpable contradiction. We are told by John, that, soon after John the Baptist commenced his ministry, the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him, to inquire who he was. "And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not." Matthew tells us, that on a certain occasion, the disciples said to Christ, "Why then say the scribes, that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall come and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed." This would seem to be a palpable contradiction. But in another place, Matthew relates Jesus to have said something which goes far to reconcile these two apparently contradictory passages. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is

Elias which was for to come." The explanation lies in the words, "if ye will receive it," showing that he is speaking of prophecy in a *conventional*, and not in an absolute sense. As much as if he had said, If you choose to interpret the prophecy, in the latter part of Malachi, of the coming of Elias as the forerunner of the Messiah, then John the Baptist is the person alluded to.

There is another instance, as it would seem, of Christ's accommodating his mode of teaching to a conventional interpretation of the Old Testament, in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord? saying, The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" This is taken from the hundred and tenth Psalm. Now there are strong objections to making this Psalm a prophecy of the true Messiah. The fifth and sixth verses contain such language as this: "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies." Christ is the Prince of Peace, and no such language is applicable to him.

The only explanation that is left is, that Christ adopted hypothetically the interpretation which the Jews put upon the hundred and tenth Psalm, in order, by reasoning with them upon their own principles, to lead them to conceive justly of the spiritual exaltation and dignity of the true Messiah.

Such are some of the facts in relation to the quotations from the Old Testament in the New. They must be admitted as facts by every candid expositor of the Bible, whatever may be the consequences to which they lead. What are these consequences? Ought they to shake our faith in the Divine origin of the Christian religion? I answer, No. The credentials of Christ and the interpretation of prophecy are two different things. The credentials to which Christ appealed were the testimony of John the Baptist, his own miracles, and his doctrine. Jesus was the Messiah, if he was the Messiah at all, independently of prophecy; that is to say, he was made so not by prophecy, but by his mission and endowments. The prophecies were intended merely to connect the old dispensation with the new, to show that they are parts of one consistent scheme of Providence, which from the beginning has been preparing the way for the onward progress of the race by successive revelations, adapted to the different stages of advancement through which mankind were destined to pass.

Two points were actually accomplished by the prophecies of the Old Testament, in the expectations of the Jewish nation: the persuasion that their religion was one day to be extended to all the nations of the earth, and that this great achievement was to be brought about by an individual of exalted character and endowments. The predictions of the extension of the true religion to the Gentiles are frequent and full, but those relating to the person and office of the Messiah are comparatively few and indefinite. The consequence was, that, while the

Jews looked forward to the universality of their religion, their expectations relating to their Messiah were exceedingly erroneous. The only way then known or conceived of among men of extending the influence of one nation over another was by *conquest.* And hence the Jews supposed that their Messiah was to be a temporal king, and by arms and warfare was to extend his dominion over the earth. Their Messiah was to be a Messiah of conquest. This, of course, from the nature of things, was impossible. True religion cannot be propagated by conquest. Invasion and violence are the last things to produce conviction. True religion can be propagated only by *conversion*, by *moral* means, by *testimony*, by *example.* The only Messiah that was possible was a Messiah of conversion. The only way in which the true religion, which was that of the Jews, could be spread over the earth, was by divesting it of its Jewish rites and ceremonies, and commending it to the acceptance of the nations by *arguments* addressed to their intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature.

To accomplish this high purpose, for which the world had been preparing from the beginning, nothing can be conceived more precisely calculated than *the mission, the character, the life, the teaching, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.* His life was perfect, his credentials sure, his doctrines effectually extracted the pure essence of true religion from the rites and ceremonies, the narrowness and prejudices, of Judaism, and cast it in such a form, and connected it with such a simple ritual, that it might become the religion of the world. It

was in this sense that he came, "not to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil."

The words then of Paul and of Christ may be reconciled. The prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom had existed since Abraham, but had not been understood. Paul had been ignorant of their true meaning, because he had adopted the expectations of his countrymen of a *conquering* Messiah. His own conversion, and his mission to the Gentiles as a preacher, and not as a military commander, revealed the whole, and his life was consumed in the endeavor to carry out the great purpose of Providence, and his mind was filled with wonder, and his lips with praise, at the contemplation of the grand design.

This, then, was probably the nature of Christ's conversations with his disciples after his resurrection, the explanation of those prophecies, which they as Jews had misunderstood, — that it was necessary, not only according to Scripture, but the nature of things, that the Messiah, instead of conquering the world, must die to the earthly hope of his countrymen, and, by rising from the dead, bring life and immortality to light, and thus become the Messiah of the world.

DISCOURSE XVI.

DEMONIACAL POSSESSION.

I HAVE YET MANY THINGS TO SAY UNTO YOU, BUT YE CANNOT BEAR THEM NOW. — John xvi. 12.

CHRIST here states a principle of wide application to divine revelation, that it is imparted, not fully and all at once, but *gradually*, in measures suited to the present enlightenment of the human understanding. This is a very important principle in the interpretation of Scripture, and becomes more and more important with the increasing light of science and general intelligence. It is the object of revelation to give mankind a knowledge of *theology* and *religion* which they could not have obtained by the unaided use of their natural powers. It was important to human welfare that such aid should have been given to man in the earlier ages of the world. But it was *not* the purpose of revelation to give to mankind supernatural knowledge of *physical science*. That was left to the natural progress of the human mind, to the gradual developments of experiment and investigation.

This fact, however, gives rise to no little embarrass-

ment in the interpretation of the Bible. Religion cannot stand alone. It has innumerable relations to physical science. A book treating of religion must often mention matters relating to the natural universe. In the absence of true knowledge, there must of course be extant a variety of *floating opinions* upon scientific subjects, some true and some false. In teaching the truths of religion, the prophet has before him two ways of proceeding: either to use the common modes of speech on scientific subjects, without affirming them to be either true or erroneous, or he must set men right on scientific subjects before he can begin to teach them on religion. If he were to teach them true science first, he would exhaust his time and strength before he could begin to enlighten them on his real mission. And such is the strength of human prejudice on merely scientific subjects, that a prophet who taught true philosophy would be almost as likely to die a martyr's death, as the inspired teacher who should attempt to promulgate a better knowledge of God and the nature and destiny of the soul. At any rate, the *union* of scientific and religious prejudices would be sufficient to crush any revelation of religious truth not upheld by perpetual miracle.

Accordingly, the prophets who have been commissioned by Almighty God to enlighten the human mind upon the subject of religion, have left human science untouched; they used the common language, and even conformed their teaching to the common apprehension; they have been contented to teach true religion, and leave science to the care of human and uninspired intelligenee.

Accordingly, when we open the Bible, we find the

sublimest and truest ideas of God in connection with the crudest and most erroneous conceptions of geology, astronomy, and even geography. The science of the first chapters of Genesis is that of the earliest infancy of mankind; but its ethical and theological doctrines are most profound,—infinitely superior to the best conceptions of the wisest of the heathen sages. We have the doctrines of one spiritual God, the almighty, all-wise, and immutable Creator and Governor of the world, the spirituality, the freedom, the accountability of the soul, taught in connection with the representation of the sun and moon as lamps, fixed in the ceiling of the sky, at no very great distance from the earth, instead of being, as they are, vast bodies, almost inconceivably remote; and heaven itself is called a *solid partition*, dividing the waters of the earth from the waters which are above the earth, and which sometimes descend in rain.

Just so it is when we open the New Testament. We find the same accommodation to the scientific ideas of the time. We find a higher and more perfect revelation of religious truth, many express improvements and amendments of the old doctrines, but connected with language implying the truth of opinions on the nature of diseases, the physical structure of the world, and the interpretation of the language of the Old Testament, which the light of modern science rejects and places among *the opinions of the time*, and which Divine Providence did not see fit to correct, but left to the gradual amendment of human investigation.

It was the universal opinion in the time of Christ,

that certain diseases, especially those affecting the mind, were caused by the possession of devils, or demons, the departed spirits of wicked men. The phenomena of lunacy were especially calculated to seize upon the superstitious element of human nature. The understanding and consciousness themselves becoming diseased, the person sometimes seemed to lose his personal identity, passions were developed which had hitherto been repressed or undeveloped, and he seemed to be animated by another soul. Hence the popular superstition, that lunatics were possessed by evil spirits. In the cure of such persons, they were treated not only medically, but magically. Not only were medicines given them, but incantations and exorcisms were pronounced over them, to dislodge the evil spirits which had obtained possession. Who these demons were, we are told by Josephus in his Jewish Wars, where he is describing the virtues of a certain plant. "Yet after this pains in getting," says he, "it is only valuable on account of one virtue it has, that if it be only brought to sick persons, it quickly drives away those called demons, which are no other than the spirits of the wicked that enter into men that are alive, and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them." Josephus tells us concerning Solomon, that "he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return; and the method of cure is of great force unto this day, for I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazer, releasing people who were demoniacal, in the presence of Vespasian and his sons and his captains

and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of cure was this: he put a ring, that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon, to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he had composed. And when Eleazer would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon as he went out of the man to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man." Such is the account which is given by Josephus—who was nearly a contemporary of Christ, and was so of his Apostles—of the superstitions which then prevailed concerning the causes and cure of lunacy.

It would seem by the narratives of the New Testament, that at that time the lunatics themselves partook of the superstition, and, attributing their mental alienation to the same cause with the superstition of the multitude, supposed themselves to be inhabited and actuated by demons. In the case of the lunatic of Gadara, Jesus asked him his name, and instead of giving his own name, he said, "My name is Legion; for we are many. And he besought him much, that he would not send them away out of the country."

Now it is certain that Christ did not attempt to correct this superstition. He used no language which implied that it was a superstition, and, if the narrative from which we have made this extract be

not colored by the same superstition, he used language which seems to confirm and authenticate the superstition. For the narrative proceeds: "Now there was there, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choked in the sea."

Here, then, is one of the floating opinions or superstitions of the age, apparently recognized and sanctioned by Christ. That superstition has been corrected by the progress of science. Lunacy is the same thing now that it was then, and proceeds from the same mental and physical causes. Its phenomena are nearly the same, differing in this indeed, that the lunatics themselves no longer, in accordance with a once popular superstition, imagine themselves to be possessed of demons.

The question is, How could Christ treat this subject as he did? How could he, as a religious teacher, forbear to correct an erroneous opinion, and set people right as to the conceptions they were to entertain with regard to the spiritual agencies which God permitted to be exercised in the world? And still more, How could he use language which *seemed* to recognize and confirm an erroneous opinion?

This question finds its solution, as it seems to me, in the following considerations. It was the dictate of the highest wisdom in Christ, to raise no questions between himself and the Jews except the

main one, whether he were or were not the true, expected Messiah. The demoniacs were cases of disease presented for cure, and they became the tests of his possessing miraculous powers. The only point in their cure in which his mission or his honor was concerned was that they were *really cured*, and that they were cured by miraculous power, the power of God, exercised through Christ, in attestation of his divine mission and authority.

His adversaries tried to avoid the force of this testimony, not by denying the reality of the cures, but by attributing them to magic, and by saying that he cast out demons through power derived from the prince of demons. These very cures did produce upon the minds of the people the effect that was intended. "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." The Pharisees saw the point of the argument, they perceived that the people drew the right inference from the facts, if they were clearly made out, and therefore attempted to turn it aside, not by denying the fact, but by pretending that he was in league with the evil spirits themselves.

Jesus immediately answers their objections. "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan,

he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges." They pretended to cast out demons, and he admits, for the sake of argument, that the exorcism was real and efficacious; and, upon the bare facts of the case, he had as much reason to accuse them of demoniacal conspiracy as they had to accuse him. But my agency, says he, is not pretended, it is real, and it is a strong proof that I am what I claim to be. "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

An occasion had occurred, which afforded him an opportunity of removing from himself an unjust imputation, merely by enlightening his audience on a point of physical science. He might have told them, that an alliance with evil spirits was *impossible*, because *there were no such things in the universe*, and the diseases thought to proceed from their agency were cases of lunacy, and proceeded from physical or moral causes. But had he done so, what would have been the consequence? He would have raised between himself and the Jews *a point of physical science*, upon which the prejudices, the opinions, and superstitions of all mankind would have been arrayed against him. He could not have convinced them by any physical or physiological arguments, and no other effect would have followed, than an empty dispute upon a subject foreign to his mission, and ending in nothing but alienation and resentment, and the cause of religious truth would have been embarrassed by an unnecessary alliance with a question of physical science.

But it is not probable that the thing would have stopped there. It had to do with the *superstitions* of mankind, and all history bears witness, that nothing is more dangerous than to come in conflict with a popular superstition. Men are much more patient when their honesty is called in question, than their understandings. He who attacks a popular superstition is always accused of impiety, and his persecutors imagine that they are doing God service. The human mind has shown itself on no subject so liable to complete infatuation, as this very subject of demoniacal possession. It is computed that thirty thousand human beings lost their lives on the gallows and at the stake in Europe, in the space of a hundred and fifty years previous to the commencement of the eighteenth century, for the impossible crime of witchcraft. But a little more than a hundred and fifty years ago, twenty persons were executed as witches and wizards in the moral, enlightened, and religious community of the Colony of Massachusetts. A clergyman of unblemished reputation, apparent piety, and great usefulness, was torn from his pulpit and his people, hung up as a wizard, and his body thrown into a hole, like a beast, under the absurd accusation that he had sold himself to the Devil!

It is impossible for us to say, with certainty, at this distance of time, what would have been the consequences had Christ denied the reality of demoniacal possession; but it is not at all improbable that it would have led to immediate persecution and death. Christ's martyrdom was intended to be of another kind. It was reserved for a higher pur-

pose. It was intended to relate to *things exclusively religious*, his own mission to the world as a teacher of religion and spiritual Saviour. It was necessary that it should be put out of the power of objectors to the end of time to say, that he perished in controversy which he had raised with the age as to the nature of a physical disease. It would have been a hindrance, instead of a help, to Christianity, to have laid down dogmatically even the truth upon the subject of demoniacal possession, until the science of the world had arrived at its recognition. More than seventeen centuries passed away before this was accomplished anywhere, and but a small part of the world is emancipated from the old superstition to this day.

There is another opinion, which has largely colored the language of the New Testament, and which was universal at the time of Christ, that concerning the *localities of heaven and hell.* It was the universal opinion of mankind at the time of Christ, that the world is what it seems to be, a vast plain of indefinite extent. Heaven stretches out above it with equal dimensions. Of its extension upwards, their ideas were very obscure. At any rate, they conceived of God as indeed omnipresent, but especially dwelling in heaven, surrounded by hosts of holy angels. But being unacquainted with the spherical form of the globe, they imagined the plain of the earth to be of no great thickness, and under it to be a vast space of corresponding dimensions with heaven above. It was broad and deep, and comparatively dark and unknown. To this place the souls of the

departed descended, through a path which no human eye had seen.

Although the words which are used to indicate this place, both in the Old Testament and the New, are rendered in our version *hell*, they do not correspond to the ideas which we attach to that word. By us it is imagined as exclusively a place of punishment. To the ancients, both Jews and heathens, it was a common receptacle for the souls of all men, both good and bad. To the heathen, it seems to have been the place of their everlasting dwelling. To the Jews it was only a temporary abode, from which they were to ascend at the general resurrection. This structure of heaven, earth, and hell, or the under-world, is shown to be a current belief as early as the time of Job. Speaking of the knowledge of God, he says: "It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? it is deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" To this vast region, the souls of all the departed descended. Isaiah speaks of the king of Babylon as going down into this place, and as he was a mighty conqueror, and overran many nations and destroyed many kings, his coming is represented as producing a great sensation among the inhabitants of that subterranean world, who had known him as a mighty monarch and terrific conqueror on earth. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?"

Ezekiel also speaks in nearly the same language of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who came forth from that country with an immense army on an expedition of conquest. "Son of Man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down to the pit." "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell, with them that help him."

After the intimate intercourse which the Hebrews had with the Greeks, although they did not conceive the general judgment to have taken place, they nevertheless seem to have considered the underworld to be a state of partial retribution. As the Greeks considered Elysium to be divided from Tartarus by the river Acheron, so the Hebrews represented Paradise and Gehenna to be divided by a great gulf, but still to be within sight of each other. How far these things in the minds of the people were literal, and how far only symbolical, it is impossible for us at this distance of time to determine. The word *Gehenna*, which is used for the place of torment in the under-world, was the name of a valley in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, where the offal of the city was thrown and consumed by a perpetual fire. It is hardly possible to suppose that the Jews could have imagined that the same name should have been applied to two places, one in the upper and the other in the under world.

These ideas of the infernal regions continued to make an integral part of the actual belief of mankind, Christians as well as heathens, for many ages

after Christ, and they were corrected only by the geographical discovery that the earth is a *sphere*, and not a *plain*, its body is solid, and has no such cavity as the ancients supposed. And astronomy has ascertained the fact, that the point of space which is at this moment vertical to us, and must have represented heaven to the ancients, in twelve hours will be precisely beneath our feet, and take the place of the ancient hell.

Christ taught no doctrine as to the structure of the earth, or the physical conditions of the future life. It made no part of his mission to do so. As we know nothing of the mode of being which the disembodied spirit assumes, there is no human language in which such a revelation could be made. No language could be adequate or accurate, and therefore, in speaking of them, the highest inspiration could use only similitudes and symbols, not to communicate accurate knowledge, for that would be impossible, but to suggest an approximate apprehension. The symbols then in use among the Jews would be abstractly just as appropriate as any other, and in fact were altogether preferable, as having been already appropriated to this purpose, and so universally understood.

When, therefore, it came in Christ's way to speak of the spiritual realities of the unseen world, the future and deserved misery of a selfish, heartless, Epicurean, and the compensation which a just God will render to the patient sufferer under his mysterious but undeserved afflictions, whom he represents under the persons of Dives and Lazarus, *he resorts for imagery, for locality and circumstances, to the*

universal conceptions of an under-world. Lazarus is borne by angels to Abraham's bosom. Dives awakes after death in the midst of flames, and sees Lazarus afar off in happiness. The rich man, convinced of the folly of his sinful life, wishes to warn his surviving brothers, and to be relieved from his torments with a drop of water by Lazarus. But there is a great *gulf* fixed between them, so that the wicked can no longer be aided by the benevolence of the righteous.

To the people of that age such language conveyed a spiritual truth, at the same time that it conformed to what they supposed to be physical realities. To us it conveys the same spiritual truth, though the images in which it is embodied, and through which it is communicated, are no longer believed to correspond to physical reality.

Here, then, is the distinction which I am endeavoring to inculcate between *doctrines* and *opinions*, fully exemplified and brought out. The future misery of a selfish, hard-hearted sensualist, and the future happiness of a patient, resigned, and uncomplaining child of affliction, are *positive doctrines*, true then and true for ever. The circumstances, the localities, Abraham's bosom and the tormenting flames, are images conformed to the *floating opinions* of the times. Ages went on believing them literally, and they would have done so at any rate. Science at last undermined *the opinion*, but it left *the doctrine* standing forth in all its original prominence and impressiveness; for the same intellectual enlightenment which outgrew the opinion enabled men to distinguish between *form* and *substance*, between

the illustration and the principle illustrated. It was no more necessary that the circumstances and localities in the parable of Dives and Lazarus should have been literal realities, in order to establish the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, than that a traveller going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and falling among thieves, should have actually experienced kindness from a Samaritan, to establish the duty of universal kindness to the unfortunate.

Yet the inveterate propensity of mankind to *petrify everything into a dogma* led the Church to involve itself in considerable doctrinal difficulty, by converting this ancient opinion in relation to an under-world into an article of Christian faith. On the cross, our Lord said to the penitent thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." This Paradise was a locality in the subterranean world, — the receptacle of the souls of the good, — and was contrasted with Gehenna, the place of torment for the wicked. The purpose of Christ in using this phraseology was undoubtedly to give the dying man an assurance that his penitence was acceptable in the sight of God, and that he would be happy in a future life. He made use of such language as would be most intelligible and striking to a man entertaining the common opinions of the time. But upon this address of Christ, and an obscure passage in the First Epistle of Peter, the ancient Church founded a clause in what has since been called the Apostles' Creed, — "*He descended into hell.*" But the progress of science, revealing the true structure of the earth, has gradually dispelled the belief upon which the clause was founded. And it is

now discarded from the copies used in most of the Protestant churches.

Such, then, is the legitimate distinction, which is ever to be kept in view in reading the New Testament, between the *doctrines taught* and the *opinions alluded to.* One is matter of faith, to be received as fact, the other is to be regarded as an accidental appendage, used only for illustration and impression.

DISCOURSE XVII.

A PERSONAL DEVIL.

YE ARE OF YOUR FATHER THE DEVIL, AND THE LUSTS OF YOUR FATHER YE WILL DO. HE WAS A MURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, AND ABODE NOT IN THE TRUTH, BECAUSE THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM. WHEN HE SPEAKETH A LIE, HE SPEAKETH OF HIS OWN: FOR HE IS A LIAR, AND THE FATHER OF IT. — John viii. 44.

Among the opinions entertained by the Jews in the time of Christ and his Apostles, which are alluded to in the New Testament, is that concerning the existence and agency of an evil being called "Satan," or "the Devil," or "the Evil One," or "the Prince of the power of the air."

The allusions to this being, though frequent, are of so general and indefinite a character, that it is difficult to make out from them all what the conceptions of that age concerning his nature, history, and employments were. They have, however, been gathered up by an English poet, a man as wonderful for his learning as for his genius, and wrought into a poem, one of the most marvellous productions of all time. Milton, by his Rabbinical as well as Biblical learning, and his profound ac-

quaintance with Oriental literature, has gathered into the "Paradise Lost" the whole history of that being whom the Jews considered as the father of evil.

He was considered as the head and leader of a legion of fallen angels. They were once holy and pure, but rebelled against God, and were banished from heaven, and confined, for the most part, to those dark, subterraneous regions which the ancients imagined to lie under the earth, to an equal length, breadth, and depth as the heavens above. This opinion is referred to in the Epistle of Jude: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, against the judgment of the great day."

Another part of this opinion was, with about as much consistency as usually pertains to popular superstitions, that they were permitted to inhabit that part of the atmosphere which is nearest our earth. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world, *according to the Prince of the power of the air*, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Philo, a Jewish writer, contemporary with Jesus and his Apostles, speaks of the whole region of the atmosphere as being "filled with spirits both good and bad, called by the Jews *angels*, but by the Greeks *demons*, some tempting men to evil, others prompting them to good." Hence the phrase of the Apostle, "that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

This function of Satan as the tempter of mankind is frequently alluded to in the New Testament. Peter, in his First Epistle, writes on this wise: "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, *walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;* whom resist steadfast in the faith." James writes: "*Resist the Devil*, and he will flee from you." Peter says to Ananias: "Why *hath Satan filled thine heart* to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" Jesus says to Peter, just before his fall: "Simon, Simon, *Satan hath desired to have you*, that he may sift you as wheat."

In accordance with this idea, the wicked of this world, especially the Gentiles, are said to be under the dominion of Satan. Said Jesus to Paul: "Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and *from the power of Satan* unto God."

Not only was Satan supposed to be at work to do evil, but to prevent good. In the parable of the sower, Christ says: "These are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, then cometh Satan immediately, and *taketh away the seed* that was sown in their hearts."

Not only had Satan the power of enticing men to *moral* evil, but of inflicting upon them *physical* evil, diseases, infirmities, madness.

Of the woman whom Christ healed of some bodily infirmity, under which she had been laboring for eighteen years, he said, "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom *Satan hath bound*, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

To the same effect Peter preaches to Cornelius and his friends: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all *that were oppressed of the Devil*, for God was with him."

Such were the opinions which were current at the time of Christ and his Apostles, concerning the Devil. When and where they sprang up, we are unable to ascertain. We can trace them to no revelation. No revelation is made concerning the Devil in the New Testament or the Old, *nor is there any direct teaching concerning him in either.* We are able to go back, however, to a time when there was no such superstition in the world. It arose, we have every reason to believe, at a period subsequent to the composition of the Pentateuch. There is no allusion to any such being in the writings of Moses.

It does not occur in the place where we should have expected to find it if it had been then in existence, in the account of the fall of man, the Devil being supposed to be the author of all evil, especially of its introduction into the world. Indeed, the invention of the person of Satan, we have every reason to believe, had a pious purpose, *to account for the existence of evil, without any imputation upon the character of God.*

Moses resorts to another expedient. Instead of saying that Adam, or the first man, being left to the freedom of his own will, sinned against God, he attributes the first conception of sin to the cunning of the serpent, *the most subtle of all the beasts of the field.* No mention whatever is made of Satan in the history of the transaction. The reason is given *why*

the serpent did it. It was not because he was animated or inspired by the Devil, but because of his *subtlety*. By giving as the cause *the natural cunning of the serpent*, he not only omits, but denies, the other. The conception that a fallen angel had anything to do in this transaction belongs to a subsequent age. We have no evidence whatever that the superstition of the Devil had then come into existence.

Had there been such a real transaction as the temptation of Eve by the Devil, it would have been perfectly easy for Moses to have so expressed it. He could have said, explicitly, that the Devil, a fallen angel, being prompted by his natural malignity, in the shape of a serpent, or through the agency of a serpent, persuaded the woman to violate the commandment of God. But failing to make the slightest allusion to the Devil, and attributing the first temptation to *the cunning of the serpent*, we are justified in saying that the agency of Satan *is not only omitted, but denied.*

Moreover, the allegorical nature of the whole narrative is more than intimated by the selection of the *serpent*. The serpent has no organs of speech. He could not speak without a miraculous transformation. God alone can change the structure of the animals he has made. And Satan, without the help of God, could not perform a physical impossibility. And after all, the admission that Satan was permitted to use the serpent would involve the miraculous interposition of God to tempt two immortal beings to ruin themselves and their whole posterity.

There is no other resort, then, than to an allegori-

cal interpretation. The tree of knowledge and the tempting serpent must be considered as an Oriental allegory, — a method of describing the introduction of physical and moral evil into the world with the least possible imputation upon the character of the Supreme Being.

Such seem to have been the views entertained upon this matter by Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, contemporary with the Apostles. In his paraphrase of the first chapter of Genesis, he says not one word of the agency or the being of a Devil. The serpent is the only agent of which he speaks. Moreover, he says in his preface: "Our Legislator speaks some things wisely, but enigmatically, and others *under a decent allegory*, but still explains such things as required a direct explanation plainly and expressly." If the account of the temptation and fall of man be not alluded to here, we are at a loss to conjecture to what part of the writings of Moses he can refer, for he soon enters upon a literal, historical narrative.

There is no reference in any part of the Scriptures of the Old Testament to any agency of Satan in the temptation of our first parents. The first allusion to such an opinion is found in the Apocrypha, in the second chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon, a book written within a hundred and fifty years of the Christian era. "For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless, through the envy of the Devil came death into the world; and they that do hold of his side do find it so." So far, then, as we are able to conjecture, as this idea is not found in

the Old Testament, and is found in the book of the Wisdom of Solomon, this interpretation of the fall must have sprung up some time between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of the New.

The personality, however, and the function of Satan, had become defined as early as the writing of the book of Job. In the commencement of that book, Satan is represented as presenting himself before God among the angels. "There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and *Satan* came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

There is a marked difference, however, between the Satan here introduced and the Devil of the New Testament. He acts as a *calumniator*, and this is the literal meaning of the word Devil. This is common to both. He inflicts diseases and calamities on men, and so has the Devil the power to do the same. But there is this clear distinction between them. The Satan of the book of Job has no power to tempt man to evil in the way of *allurement* and *persuasion*. The Devil of the New Testament has. The Satan of the book of Job has no power to inflict diseases and calamities, *except by God's permission*. "Doth Job," said he, "fear God for naught? Hast thou not made an hedge about him and all that he hath." That hedge Satan himself could not pass to do him wrong. He then goes on to speak of God as alone having power to afflict him: "*But put forth thy hand* now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse

thee to thy face." Satan can do nothing against him until he is *permitted* and *commissioned* by God. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

Various calamities befell Job, it is intimated, by the instrumentality of Satan. He is stripped of all, yet maintains his integrity. Satan is baffled, and again presents himself with the angels before God and confesses his ill success, but suggests that Job will be overcome by some *bodily* infliction in the shape of disease. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his *bone* and his *flesh*, and he will curse thee to thy face." Again, he *receives permission* to afflict him, and with bodily disease. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, but spare his life."

The Devil of the New Testament is represented in a different light. He has the power to tempt men *directly* in the way of allurement and persuasion, and he acts independently of the Divine permission; he inflicts diseases at his own pleasure, irrespective of the Divine leave, and is subject only to be arrested in his operations by the power of God.

I recur thus to the introduction of Satan into the book of Job, to illustrate the history of an *opinion*, but not to imply that the author entertained any real belief in his existence and agency. There are strong reasons for believing that he did not. However real may have been the personal history of Job, the form into which that history is thrown in the Old Testament is that of a poem. All poems, both sacred and profane, have their *machinery*, drawn

usually from the current opinions of the times as to supernatual agency. The object of the poem is to exhibit and celebrate the triumph of a truly good and holy man over trial and temptation. He is to be tried, not that he may fall, but that he may stand, and appear the more illustrious for having been tried. But here occurs a difficulty, on the very threshold of the undertaking. *Who is to be represented as tempting Job?* Would it be in keeping to represent God as tempting him *directly?* If God were made the immediate agent, then there would seem to be an inconsistency, a sort of insincerity, on the part of God. On the one hand, he tempts Job to do wrong, and on the other, he forbids him to comply with the temptation, which he himself places before him. Besides, Job is a perfect and upright man. Does it seem consistent with perfect justice and perfect goodness to afflict an innocent man, to subject him to suffering and loss, merely by way of experiment? Therefore is *Satan* introduced, to do that which seems, at first sight, to be unworthy of God. It is merely an evasion of the old difficulty of the origin of evil. And after all, it is *only* an evasion. The causes which Satan puts in operation to try Job are all material agents, belonging to God's universe, *of which he possesses the entire control;* and indeed their operation in one case in the narrative is attributed immediately to Divine agency. "*The fire of God* has fallen from heaven, and has burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them." It would hardly be consistent to represent the fire of God as sent by the Devil. So that, after all, the agency of Satan is merely *scenic*, and evidently not

intended to be literal, and to be a matter of religious faith or doctrinal inculcation.

This leads me to say, that, as far as my investigations have gone, Satan, or the Devil, from the first mention made of him in the Bible, has always been, very much as he is now, *a real person* to the uninformed, and *a personification* to the intelligent. And therefore the language concerning him, according to the analysis we are pursuing of the New Testament, wavers between *opinion* and *mere phraseology*, sometimes arranging itself under one, and sometimes under the other.

That it was at first a mere personification, appears from the fact that Satan neither in Hebrew nor in Greek has any proper name. There is nothing revealed concerning him, and he has no history. His name in Hebrew was a word signifying *an adversary*, and was long applied to man before it was applied to the personification or the author of evil. In the Greek it was *an accuser* or *calumniator*, and is applied to human beings in the New Testament no less than to the Prince of Darkness.

That it was at first used for a mere personification of the principle of evil, just as it is now, may be made evident by a few quotations. In the Second Book of Samuel it is said: "And again, *the anger of the Lord* was kindled against Israel, and *he moved* David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." In the First Book of Chronicles, the same transaction is thus related: "And *Satan* stood up against Israel, and he provoked David to number Israel."

This difference of representation is very significant.

The book of Chronicles was written many ages after the book of Samuel, probably after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, whereas the book of Samuel was written near the time when the events it relates took place. The book of Samuel is the original document, and it represents *the Lord* as having moved David to number Israel. This account speaks of David as *the instrument in the hands of Providence* of punishing Israel. This was true at all events. God uses the wickedness of one man to scourge the vices of another. But then this mode of representation lies open to the objection, that it makes God the author of sin, and then the punisher of the very sin which he himself has caused.

In escaping this imputation, the author of the book of Chronicles, who was of the sacerdotal order, and a strenuous supporter of the theocracy in the royal line of David, must have given as the true cause *the ambition and presumption of that revered monarch*, had he not gone behind his agency, and attributed this act of disobedience to the instigation of Satan.

Under such circumstances, it is impossible for us to say how far the writer himself had any distinct, affirmative idea of the agency of Satan in the breach of God's commandment, that Israel should not be numbered. To my mind, it has the appearance of being *a mere conventionalism*, the use of a common and popular mode of speech, by which the origin of all evil is referred to the Devil, or by which evil itself is personified and embodied in one universal and omnipresent agent, the foe of God and man and goodness.

Some such floating idea as this has prevailed in

many, I might say almost all, nations and ages of the world. It is a convenient mode of speech to those who do not believe in any real being of this nature, as well as to those who do. The phraseology with regard to the Devil may never die out. At any rate, it will long survive every vestige of actual belief.

There are many passages of the New Testament, in which the use of the words Devil and Satan is evidently merely *conventional*, and is nothing but *mere phraseology*.

At one period of his ministry, Jesus sent out his disciples to preach by themselves. At their return, they report their success. They say, moreover, "Lord, even the devils [demons] are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." This, of course, is a figurative expression. No personal Satan can be meant here, but only the downfall of the kingdom of Satan, which is the kingdom of evil. It might seem, at first sight, that Satan is here referred to as the head and chief of the devils or demons which were cast out. But he goes on to say, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." The *enemy* and *Satan* are evidently intended to be synonymous. "Serpents," then, and "scorpions," and "all the power of the enemy," must be a universal and comprehensive expression for all evil, and the enemy, Satan, is its symbolic head. The causes of evil in this world are not under the control of the Devil, but under the control of God; and the production of evil is attributed to Satan to

avoid the apparent impiety of attributing the origin of evil to God.

The like principles are applicable to the interpretation of the words of the text: "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Here are all the forms of reference to a real person. But if we make the latter part literal, we must make the first part so too. Then we shall make Christ assert that the Devil was literally the father of those Jews with whom he was then conversing. If the first was a figure of speech, we have as much reason to believe that the last is so too, and that the whole address is a reference, not to an historical transaction, but to a popular superstition, and was intended to be understood as such.

Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, writes: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." This of course can be no other than a figurative and symbolic expression, by which Satan is put for all evil. It is merely equivalent to saying, "God shall soon give you to triumph over all the evils you feel or fear."

The loose and general way in which the personality and agency of the Devil are spoken of in the New Testament is illustrated in the First Epistle of John. "He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. . . . . In this the

children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." To be "of God," to be "a child of God," and "to do righteousness," mean all the same thing. "Not to do righteousness," to be "a sinner" and "a child of the Devil," have likewise all the same signification. On both sides, this phraseology has reference not to *origin*, but to *character*. To destroy the work of the Devil is to convert men from sin to holiness. Here is the same reference to the introduction of sin into the world by the instrumentality of Satan, which we have seen is *not* found in the first chapters of Genesis, but was an invention of a later age.

It is difficult to decide, in such cases as this, whether to set such language down to the account of *mere phraseology*, or to consider it as a reference to *an opinion* then extant in the world. There are some cases in which the use of the expressions Satan and Devil, for the principle of evil, seems to be that figurative mode of speech which is spontaneous under the prompting of strong emotion.

This seems especially to be the case with reference to Judas Iscariot. His treachery was so base, his ingratitude so revolting, that to Jesus and his Apostles it seemed incommensurate with any common epithets of reproach, and utterly unaccountable on the supposition of any ordinary motives of conduct. Hence he is introduced as having been instigated, or rather possessed, by the Devil, and is actually called a Devil by Christ himself.

Luke says of him, when he first conceives the

idea of betraying Jesus: "And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them."

John coincides with Luke in representing the betrayal of Jesus to have been brought about by diabolical agency, but he represents the Devil as having entered into him at another time; not when he first determined to betray Jesus, but when he went from the table of the Passover to perpetrate the act. Jesus is related to have pointed him out to the other disciples by giving him a sop, that is, a piece of bread dipped in some species of liquid. "He it is," said Jesus, "to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him."

This diversity of representation shows that *there was literally no Devil in the case.* It is not historical verity which the Evangelists aim to give, for then they would have agreed as to *the time* when the possession took place. Their different mode of representing it shows that, in both cases, it is a figure of speech for the access of those diabolical passions, which led one of the companions and disciples of the blessed Saviour to betray him to condemnation and death.

I have now made it evident, I trust, to all who have listened to me attentively, that the existence, the personality, and the agency of Satan, or the

Devil, are *not* doctrines of the New Testament. They are nowhere revealed, they are nowhere directly taught. They were *opinions* which sprung up among the Jews, just as similar opinions sprung up among other nations, in the endeavor to account for the origin of evil generally, and especially without involving the character of God in its introduction into the world. And they are referred to by Christ and his Apostles, not to affirm them and fix them in the faith of the world, but as the common modes of speech upon certain subjects then in use among those whom they addressed.

As philosophical causes, they utterly fail of accounting for the phenomena in question, and as an apology for the existence of evil under the Divine government, they *subvert*, instead of establishing, the equity of God's dealings with men.

Indeed, the moral argument against them seems to me conclusive. One part of the punishment which God inflicts upon us for doing wrong is the remorse we feel for having violated God's law under the impulse of appetites and passions whose strength we know, and the allurement of temptations whose force we can weigh against the moral power with which God has endowed us. If there is another agent in the transaction, Satan, an invisible and powerful being, with the extent of whose influence we are wholly unacquainted, then the torments of remorse may be wholly unjust, or at least altogether disproportionate to our real guilt.

It is far more honorable to the Divine government to believe that we can *know* all our spiritual foes, and be conscious when we fall through our own

fault, or are borne down by enemies unappreciated and unseen. It is more honorable to God to believe, with the Apostle James, that, "when a man is tempted, he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed"; and with the Son of Sirach, that "when the ungodly curseth Satan, he curseth his own soul."

DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST TO THE EARTH.

KNOWING THIS FIRST, THAT THERE SHALL COME IN THE LAST DAYS SCOFFERS, WALKING AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS, AND SAYING, WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING? FOR SINCE THE FATHERS FELL ASLEEP, ALL THINGS CONTINUE AS THEY WERE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION. — 2 Peter iii. 3, 4.

Among the opinions which existed among the Apostles and early Christians, traces of which appear in the New Testament, is the expectation *that Christ was to return personally to the earth during the lives of the first propagators of Christianity.* This, of course, cannot be placed among the *positive doctrines* of Christianity, as no such event ever took place. I propose in the two following Discourses to consider this whole subject. It is one of great interest. Gibbon has made it the occasion of one of his solemn sneers at the origin and propagation of the Christian faith. "In the primitive Church," says he, "the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was

universally believed that the end of the world and the kingdom of heaven were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the Apostles, the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before the generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition on earth, and which might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation; but as long as for wise purposes this error was permitted to subsist in the Church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment when the globe itself, and all the various races of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their divine judge."

In treating of this subject, I shall first inquire, Are there traces of such an expectation in the New Testament? Was such a doctrine taught by Christ? How came the Apostles to entertain it? Did they teach it as *a positive doctrine*, — a part and parcel of Christianity; or did they refer to it as *an opinion*, concerning which they themselves were by no means certain?

That the Apostles themselves cherished such an expectation cannot, I think, well be denied. I begin with Paul. To the Corinthians he writes: "So that ye come behind in no gift, *waiting for the coming of*

our Lord Jesus Christ." Now the most obvious construction of this passage is that which makes it refer to an event which was to take place *in that age*, within the lifetime of at least some who then belonged to the Christian Church.

To Titus he writes: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*" This certainly describes an event which was expected to take place at any time, and might even be daily looked for. The connection of the appearance of God with the appearance of Christ has a bearing which is important, but which I cannot now stop to develop.

To Timothy he writes: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead *at his appearing and his kingdom*, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season..... For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, *but unto all them also that love his appearing.*" This was written when Paul was now an old man, and did not expect to live long; and although it seems to express a doubt whether *he* should live to see the second coming of Christ, he seems to speak of other Christians, his contempora-

ries, who would still live on in the constant expectation of that joyful event.

To the Philippians he writes: "For our conversation is in heaven, *from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,* who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Who they were to whom the Apostle refers as destined to be changed, we may learn by reference to the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. There it is said: "Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, *but we shall all be changed.* In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed.*" There is a passage to the same effect in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then *we which are alive and remain* shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord."

Language could scarcely be stronger to prove that Paul anticipated the return of Christ to the earth *in his own day,* or at least within the lifetime of some who then composed the Christian Church.

Let us now see what were the sentiments of the other writers of the New Testament. Of them, take first the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the tenth chapter he says to the Hebrews: "For *ye have need of patience,* that, after ye have done the

will of God, ye might receive the promise; for *yet a little while*, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." In the same chapter he likewise says: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more *as ye see the day approaching*."

A day which they saw approaching could not be far off, and that coming must be near for which they were exhorted *to wait with patience*.

Let us examine the writings of Peter, that we may learn what were his expectations. He exhorts the Christians to whom he writes: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and *hope to the end* for the grace that *is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*." In another place he says: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, *when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad* also with exceeding joy." The revelation of Christ's glory does not seem to be a thing to be made known to them at death, but during their natural lives.

But there is a passage still more decisive: "But *the end of all things is at hand;* be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." An event for which they were continually to watch, could not have been any other than one which was expected to take place, at least, in that age.

Let us now turn to the Apostle John. In his First Epistle he says: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, *when he shall appear, we may have confi-*

dence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." In another place, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" This coincides with the quotation which we made from Paul, in which he speaks of Christ's appearing and changing *our* vile body, and making it like his own glorious body.

There remain but three writers more concerning the affairs of the Christians after the resurrection of Christ, — James, Jude, and the author of the Book of Revelation. The sentiments of the last two are obvious, and it remains only to make an extract from James. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord.* Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient, *for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*"

It is needless to multiply further quotations from the New Testament, in order to show that it was the unanimous expectation of the writers of the apostolic age, that Christ was to return to the earth at least before all that generation should have gone down to the grave. It is needless, likewise, to add, that no such event really took place. That generation all passed away, many of the Christians by an awful exit from this world, — the cross, the axe, and flames. Still the Saviour came not. That century elapsed, and there was no appearance of Christ "from heaven with flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that knew not God and obeyed not the

Gospel of Jesus Christ." Time has rolled on, and eighteen centuries have passed, without that disclosure which seems to be so clearly predicted.

And what are we to say? Are we to confess what Gibbon insinuates, that the non-fulfilment of this expectation is fatal to Christianity as a revelation from God? It would be so, if we were to consider the Scriptures, as they have generally been considered, *a homogeneous whole*, every part of which is to be considered *as doctrine*, for which immediate inspiration is responsible.

Hence the necessity of the distinction which in these Discourses we are attempting to establish, between *the doctrines* of the Gospel and *the opinions* of the Apostles and of the age. I say, then, that Christ never taught such a doctrine, and if the Apostles derived it from his language, it was a misapprehension. And more than this, I say, if their language is minutely examined, they do *not* make it a positive prophecy or prediction, that Christ was to return to the earth in their day, but only mention it as an *expectation*, a *probability*, whose speedy occurrence they *judged* to be consequent on certain other facts, which were sure, and really existed.

In order to form a determinate and satisfactory judgment of this matter, it will be necessary to examine minutely the prophetic language of Christ. Not only did Christ fill the office of a teacher, a lawgiver, the founder of a new and universal religion, but he likewise acted as a prophet in the strictest sense of the term. He predicted future events, which could be anticipated by no human foresight. The purpose for which he did so is expressly declared.

"Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." It was that his disciples might have not only the evidence of his superhuman doctrines and his miraculous works, but *his fulfilled predictions*, to establish their faith in him as the Messiah, in that and all succeeding ages.

The first that occur are his predictions concerning his death, and its attending circumstances of time, place, and manner. Had he not done so, it would have seemed to his disciples, that he was overtaken by an untimely and unexpected catastrophe. His ministry might have seemed incomplete and terminated by disappointment. But since it was foretold, it appears as a part of the Divine plan, not only foreseen, but a necessary element of his mission upon the earth.

Just before he left them, his soul seems to have been wrapt in visions of futurity. As he glanced his prophetic eye along the vista of coming ages and the boundless expanse of infinite duration, *three* events especially attracted his notice; the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish religion and nation, the establishment and universal spread of his own religion, and the retributions of eternity. In describing these, he uses mainly the language of prophecy, which is the language, not of literal description, but of symbols.

There is a close analogy, in respect of structure, between the close of the old dispensation and the new; and one may be profitably studied in illustration of the other. After Moses had promulgated and recorded the law, and had established the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of the nation of Israel,

just before he left them, he assumed the attitude of a prophet. His mind passes down through the ages to come, and delineates rapidly, but with a wonderfully graphic power, the chief events of the history of a people who had not yet been established in their destined seats. He describes their declensions from the worship of the true God, and the punishments which he was to inflict upon them in consequence. He goes so minutely into their history, as to describe their invasion by cruel and unknown foreigners, and their being led away into captivity. He describes their penitence and their restoration, with an exact correspondence with their real history.

From this he ascends, by language highly poetic and symbolic, to assert God's general providence, and to foreshow his acts as the Judge and Rewarder of men.

"To me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the Lord shall *judge* his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone and there is none shut up or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? Let them rise and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me. I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take

hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me."

Here, you perceive, is an ascent from specifics to generals; from the special providences of God toward the nation of Israel, to the general and all-comprehending idea of his universal government, in which God is presented as the sole, supreme, unequalled and unapproachable Jehovah, the Lawgiver, the Judge and Rewarder of men, but dispensing his retributions with rigor, especially with reference to the Mosaic institute, which forbids the worship of other gods, and confines it solely to himself.

In a like manner, Christ, after having promulgated the New Dispensation, assumes, among the last acts of his public ministry, the attitude of a prophet, and foreshows the future fortunes of his religion in the world; first, his own death, resurrection, and ascension, and the bearing which these events will have upon the reception and power of his religion in the world; then its promulgation among all nations; then its final establishment by the destruction of Judaism, its only rival; and, finally, the future retributions of eternity, which were to take place according to the principles of his religion.

Concerning events which were immediately to take place, and on which the faith and conduct of his disciples at the outset of their enterprise were to depend, he is full and explicit. Concerning events of a remoter period, he is more figurative and obscure. On the evening of his apprehension, and not a day before his death, he said to his disciples: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night;

for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." In a solemn prayer to God, he predicts his own death as a thing immediately to take place. "Father, *the hour is come.* Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." "And now *I am no more in the world,* but these are in the world, and *I come to thee.*"

He foretold the effect which his death, his resurrection, and ascension would produce upon his followers. His death would make them profoundly sad, and humble them before a scoffing and triumphant world. "Verily, verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." But his resurrection was to reanimate and reassure them. "And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." "And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

He told them that it was necessary that he should go away, and be removed from the earth, for till he was taken away from their earthly hopes, they could not understand his religion nor their own mission; or, in his phraseology, receive "the Spirit of truth." "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. . . . . When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth."

This prophecy was literally and immediately fulfilled. Fifty days from Christ's crucifixion saw an

entire change in his disciples. Truth bursting upon their minds from the cross, the tomb, the resurrection, and ascension of Christ, transformed them from worldly, ambitious, timid, unintellectual, and obscure men, into courageous, firm, energetic teachers of a spiritual faith, and from the selfish seekers of earthly power to the founders of the kingdom of God.

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST TO THE EARTH.

NOW WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND BY OUR GATHERING TOGETHER UNTO HIM, THAT YE BE NOT SOON SHAKEN IN MIND, OR BE TROUBLED, NEITHER BY SPIRIT, NOR BY WORD, NOR BY LETTER, AS FROM US, AS THAT THE DAY OF CHRIST IS AT HAND. LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU BY ANY MEANS: FOR THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME, EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, AND THAT MAN OF SIN BE REVEALED, THE SON OF PERDITION. — 2 Thessalonians ii. 1 - 3.

THE next prophecy of Christ, in the order of time, after those relating to his death, his resurrection and ascension, and the commencement of the preaching of his religion by his Apostles, was *his prediction of its extension to the Gentiles.* This is the more remarkable, as it was wholly contradictory to the deep-seated prejudices of the Jewish nation, and the expectations of the Apostles themselves concerning the kingdom of the Messiah. They had been educated to expect a Messiah who should *conquer*, but not one who should *convert*, the world. So wholly averse were their minds from this arrangement, that, notwithstanding Christ's final commission to them was,

"*Go, teach all nations*," nothing of the kind was done or attempted by them for the first ten years. The bitterness of the Jewish feeling upon this point may be learned from Paul's defence of himself at Jerusalem, when he was apprehended under suspicion of introducing heathens into the temple. He tells them that Christ sent him to preach to the heathen: "And he said unto me, Depart, for *I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.* And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

That the contempt of the Pagans for the Jews did not fall behind the hatred of the Jews for the Pagans, all contemporaneous literature bears witness. It was quite as improbable that a Jew should have been willing to impart the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom to the Gentiles, as that the Gentiles should have been willing to receive a religion from the Jews. And yet, under these circumstances, Christ prophesies, "And this Gospel of the kingdom *shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations;* and then shall the end come." Nearly ten years passed away before the Gospel was preached to the heathen at all, and then it required a special miracle to instruct Peter, that he was no longer to call any man common or unclean, and the Holy Ghost poured out on Cornelius and his companions was the only thing which could convince him that God was no respecter of persons. The miraculous conversion of Paul, and his mission to the Gentiles, settled the question, and fulfilled the prophecy of Christ; for he himself preached the Gospel in nearly all the principal cities of the Roman empire.

Next are Christ's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, the ruin of the Jewish nation, and the close of the Mosaic dispensation as the religion recognized by God. The principal predictions relating to this event were uttered during his last visit to Jerusalem, and many of them within sight of the temple. "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be *the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*"

This question indicates the origin of the misapprehension under which the disciples afterwards labored as to futurity through their whole ministry. It contains two phrases which were equivocal, "the coming of Christ," and "the end of the world." The word here rendered "world" had two meanings, as likewise the Hebrew word to which it corresponds. It means sometimes *the material universe*, but more often *an age* or *a dispensation of religion.* And *the coming of Christ* is used to indicate no less than *four different epochs* in the New Testament,—his assumption of his office, the preaching and establishment of his religion in the world, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final consummation of all things, ending in the general judgment.

The establishment of Christ's religion in the world is called by him "his coming." When Jesus was

arraigned before the Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the Jewish nation, at the head of which sat the high-priest, he was solemnly interrogated, — in fact, in modern phraseology, put on oath, — to say, whether he were the true Messiah. Under the solemnity of an oath, he answers in the affirmative. "And the high-priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, *From this time* shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and *coming in the clouds of heaven.*" To our cold Occidental imaginations this seems to be the language of ecstasy or enthusiasm. Who ever saw Christ, either in that or any other age, literally sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven? What did Christ mean by it? He was speaking to highly educated Jews, who were familiar with Oriental imagery, and the highly symbolic language of prophecy. He adopted the most impressive way of saying, "I affirm under oath that I am the Messiah; and not only so, the proof does not depend on my word. From this time you shall see my cause and religion so owned and aided by God, that it shall be as evident to you that I am the Messiah, as it would be were you to see me sitting on God's right hand, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Such figures of speech are not stronger than he used on other and similar occasions. When Nathaniel declared himself convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, by the fact that he was able to tell him

where he had been, when it was a physical impossibility that he could have seen him with his bodily eyes, Jesus answered him, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter," or, as in the other case, "*From this time* ye shall see *heaven opened*, and *the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*" Did Christ's disciples ever see this prediction *literally* fulfilled? Did they ever see the heavens literally opened, and the angels passing and repassing from heaven to Christ, and from Christ to heaven? They saw no such thing. But they *did* see such a succession of miracles, of interruptions of the ordinary laws and course of nature, wrought by the power of God in attestation of Christ's divine mission, that his being the Messiah was just as manifest to them, as if they saw a constant stream of angels sent down by God to Christ, and returning again from him to heaven.

When the seventy returned and announced their success as the preachers of the Gospel, Christ is reported by Luke to have said, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*" Do we believe that Christ intended this language to be interpreted as a *literal* representation? None but the most ignorant can do so. What, then, do we consider it? We interpret it as a strong figure, representing the downfall of evil under the influence of the Gospel now beginning to exert its redeeming and renovating power.

After considering Christ's use of such bold figures

as the descent of angels from heaven in the sight of men, and of Satan's being seen to fall like lightning from heaven, we learn to judge how far he is to be taken literally when he tells the Sanhedrim that they shall see him *seated on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* If one may be interpreted by a succession of miracles, and the other of the destruction of the kingdom of evil, then may the third be interpreted to mean *the spiritual coming of Christ's kingdom upon earth, and the testimony of God's ordinary and miraculous providence to its truth.*

Especially is this the case, when we may consider the language of Christ as combining both *a prophecy* and *a claim.* Almost all the language which was extant in the time of Christ in relation to the new dispensation, then shortly expected to appear, was derived from the Old Testament. The portion of it which had the most influence in forming that phraseology, and was most often quoted, was the seventh chapter of Daniel. In that there occurs this passage: "And I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man *came with the clouds of heaven,* and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And *there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,* that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." When Christ quoted the language of this passage, and applied it to himself, *he claimed to be the Messiah, as well as prophesied that he would be recognized as such.*

Christ had come in a literal sense already, for he was then upon the earth. He often speaks of himself as having done so. "The Son of Man *came* eating and drinking." The coming of which he spoke to the Sanhedrim was *metaphorical*, in the sense of *identifying himself with his religion.* That made very little progress before his resurrection and ascension. Indeed, previously to that time, his own disciples did not understand it. His ascension was immediately followed by the conversion of three thousand. The supper, the grand rite of Christianity, the bond of Christian union, being the commemoration of Christ's death, could not be celebrated before that event had taken place. *Then, in fact, the Christian Church, which is the true kingdom of God, began to exist.* Christ risen and ascended was more powerful here upon the earth than he had been during the days of his flesh. It was to this, probably, that he alluded on the evening before his crucifixion, when Judas had gone out to betray him. "Now is the Son of Man glorified." It was this exaltation of Christ of which Paul spoke when he wrote to the Ephesians: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, *and set him at his own right hand* in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." This corresponds almost in expression to one clause of Christ's prediction to the Sanhedrim: "From this time, ye shall see the Son of Man *sitting on the*

right hand of power." And in all these cases it is merely a figurative expression for *being exalted to great authority.*

It was to this coming that Christ referred when he sent out his disciples to preach in the different cities of Judæa, during his own ministry. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, *Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.* But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel *till the Son of Man be come.*" The coming of the Son of Man here referred to must have been *his resurrection and ascension*, because these events terminated this first commission. This first commission *was restricted to the land of Palestine and the Jews.* The Gentiles were especially excluded. After his resurrection he commissioned them anew. "Go, and teach *all* nations."

Another epoch in the establishment of Christianity was the destruction of Jerusalem and the final dispersion of the Jewish nation. Without this event Christianity could not have been established at all. Christianity was intended to supersede Judaism. "The Law and the prophets were until John; since that, the kingdom of God is preached." If Judaism had not passed away, Christianity could not have come; for it was plainly irrational to suppose that God could have two recognized religions on earth at the same time. As long as the temple stood, and its rites were

daily celebrated as of old, the converts from Judaism were only half Christians. It was only the converts from Paganism who were Christians in full, who observed and practised the rites of Christianity, and nothing else. The converted Jews who dwelt in Palestine went on to observe the Mosaic law, circumcised their children, and kept the seventh day as a Sabbath. Not only so, not only were they zealous observers of the Law themselves, but they were bent on bringing all the converts from Paganism under the same yoke. As long as the temple stood, although Christianity was established by its own independent evidence, Judaism was not abolished. It apparently enjoyed the Divine sanction.

The Jews had rejected Christ as the Messiah pointed out in their sacred Scriptures. The highest authority, the grand council of their nation, had decided against his claims. Their decision was a matter of record. The controversy, so to speak, between God and the Jews then was, whether he were the true Messiah or not. It was partially decided by his resurrection, ascension, and the miraculous aid granted to his Apostles. But to put the thing beyond all dispute, it was necessary that *Judaism itself should be destroyed* by the entire destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the nation, never more to be re-established in their native seats. Then Christianity reigned alone, the claims of Christ were vindicated, and his kingdom came with power and great glory.

Let us recur to his prophecies of that event. It is recorded of him, that at his last visit to Jerusalem, as he approached within sight of the city, "he

wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Afterwards, from the Mount of Olives, he portrayed at large the destruction of the city, and the distress of the nation. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled..... For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people! And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. *And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*"

This is from the Gospel of Luke. Matthew and Mark report him to have said also, "And the stars shall fall from heaven." All report him to have subjoined, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things shall be fulfilled." Of course they must have seen "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory," in the sense here intended. It was probably to this coming that Christ alluded when he said, on a certain occasion, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." I say it is probable that it is to the destruction of Jerusalem that he here alludes, for the coming which followed his death and resurrection took place within two months, and it would not have been spoken of as a thing to be noticed, that some standing there should live two months. It applies more naturally to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place about thirty-seven years afterwards; and John, of all the disciples, was the only one who lived to see it. It may have been to the protracted life of John, and his living to see Jerusalem destroyed, that Christ alluded, when he said of him to Peter, when he inquired what was to become of John, "If I will *that he tarry till I come*, what is that to thee?"

If John was the person alluded to on the former of these occasions, and his living to see Jerusalem destroyed on the latter, what coming of Christ did he witness? *Did he see him coming in a cloud?* No such historical event is recorded. What did he see, then? He saw Christianity propagated far and

wide, from the remote East to Western Europe. He saw the only impediment to its firm establishment overcome, in the final overthrow of Judaism, its only formidable rival in the world. In that he saw the prophecies of Christ fulfilled, he saw his claims to the Messiahship vindicated by the destruction of the nation which had denied and crucified him. He saw that admixture of Judaism with Christianity, which was caused, upheld, and perpetuated by the continuance of the temple and the temple service, in the process of being purged away. He saw, in fact, the establishment of Christianity as God's only recognized religion upon earth.

How came the disciples, then, to make the double mistake, that Christ was to come in person, and that the world should be destroyed within the lifetime of that generation? The answer is, that it was by too literal an interpretation of the highly figurative and symbolic language of prophecy. The war of the elements, the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars, the shaking of the powers of heaven, portended, not *physical destruction*, but *moral and civil revolutions*. And so they had done in the prophecies of the Old Testament. There was no destruction of the physical world predicted. The very opposite, the long continuance of the world, would naturally be inferred from the fact, that Christ professed to be promulgating a religion which was the destined possession of all nations. Nothing could be morally more improbable, than that this religion should be made universal, and the world be destroyed in the same age. Christ had said to his disciples concerning the woman who anointed his

head with the precious ointment, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached *in the whole world*, there shall also this which this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Such language as this does not intimate the approaching destruction of the world, but rather its long continuance.

There is, moreover, in this very prophecy, a clause which might have set them right as to the approaching end of the world, and plainly indicates that the present order of things was to remain for ages to come. Instead of the world's coming to an end when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, Christ says, "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" If the world itself was to come to an end in the catastrophe spoken of in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, then there would be no Jerusalem to be trodden down of the Gentiles, and no Gentiles to tread down Jerusalem. Periods of no less duration are here alluded to than those which measure a nation's existence.

There were, likewise, many analogous passages in the Old Testament, with which the Jews were familiar, which might have served to interpret Christ's language in the New,— passages which describe the coming of God with awful commotions of external nature, where nothing is meant but the common course of his providence, vindicating the innocent and punishing the guilty; and a great disturbance, a total overthrow and destruction of *physical nature*, often means nothing more than great *social* and *political* changes and calamities, or personal deliverance.

In the eighteenth Psalm, David describes in highly poetical language his deliverance from some great danger or calamity. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then *the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken*, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. *He bowed the heavens also, and came down;* and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; *his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.*..... The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice, hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me; for they were too strong for me."

Now we have no reason to believe that this material description is anything other than a highly poetic representation of some remarkable deliverance of David by the ordinary providence of God,

nor is it intended to be. *David did not actually see God coming in cloud and tempest, with thunder and lightning, to his deliverance.* The mountains were *not* moved, nor the waves of the sea so divided that the interior of the solid earth was seen. But because his deliverance was *providential*, he chose to describe God as the agent with such poetic embellishments as befitted the subject.

There is in the prophet Isaiah the same use of the images of *the destruction and change of the material creation* to symbolize great national calamities. Edom was to be devastated by an invading army, many were to be slain, the cities were to be burned, and the land made desolate. But it is described in images highly poetical. "The mountains shall be melted with their blood. *And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine*, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven; behold, it shall come down upon Idumæa, upon the people of my curse, to judgment." "And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. *It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.*" And yet, *no* such physical changes ever took place. It is all figurative, and symbolically represents the destruction of a country by an invading army.

Accustomed to such prophetic language as this, there is no good reason why the disciples should have interpreted Christ's coming to the destruction

of Jerusalem of his *personal* appearance, or the falling of the stars and the shaking of the powers of heaven *as an actual and literal dissolution of the earth and the physical universe.* We are justified, then, I think, in saying, that *Christ predicted no such thing*, and its non-fulfilment is no argument against the truth of Christianity.

Finally, the Apostles themselves did not teach the personal return of Christ to the earth in their own day *as a positive doctrine of Christianity.* On the contrary, they propose it as an *opinion or judgment of their own*, grounded on the language of Christ. Christ himself declared that *he was ignorant* of the precise time when Jerusalem was to be destroyed. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father." He moreover asserts, that it was not the intention of God to give the Apostles any accurate information as to the events of futurity. After his resurrection, they ask him, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons *which the Father hath put in his own power.*"

Accordingly, Peter, in his second speech to the Jews, a few weeks after this, when Christ had gone to heaven, puts an *indefinite* period between the ascension of Christ and his return to the earth: "Repent ye, therefore, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive *until the times of the restitution of all*

things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." The language is sufficiently indefinite here, you perceive, to extend over ages, and even to the consummation of the history of the world. And in his old age he writes to his converts, in answer to those who objected that the Divine promise had failed, and began to inquire, "Where is the promise of his coming?"—"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that *one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" According to this mode of reckoning, thousands of years might elapse before the event predicted should take place.

John gives it as *his judgment*, not as a prophecy of his own or of Christ, that the world was drawing to an end, because something else had taken place which it was generally understood was to precede the end which Christ had foretold. "Little children, *it is the last time*, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists, *whereby* we know that it is the last time." Paul, in that passage of his Epistle to the Thessalonians selected as the text of this Discourse, warns them not to be disturbed by any alarm propagated among their brethren, that the coming of Christ was near at hand. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, *as that the day of Christ is at hand.* Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away

first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

This prophecy has not yet been understood, — a plain proof that it has not yet been fulfilled.

I trust I have said enough to show that the personal appearance of Christ in the age of the Apostles *was not a doctrine of Christ*, nor was it prophecy; but only a vague expectation of the Apostles, *an opinion* founded on his language.

DISCOURSE XX.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

FROM THAT TIME JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH, AND TO SAY, REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND. — Matthew iv. 17.

In the analysis of the New Testament in which we have been engaged, three elements have already been discussed, — historical facts, doctrines, opinions. There remains a fourth element, *Phraseology*, — modes of speech belonging to the language, the nation, and the age. These are carefully to be observed, as they have been a fruitful source of error and misapprehension in other nations and other times.

Much of the language of Christ and his Apostles was *conventional.* That is to say, it was not invented and introduced by Christ for the first time. It was adopted by Christ, because it was already in use, and applied to purposes for which he used it. It was better and more to his purpose, therefore, than a language altogether new. But he often took the liberty of using the old language with a new signification, corresponding to the facts of the case.

Christ's mission, or the New Dispensation, was not a sudden, unanticipated phenomenon upon the earth. The world had been preparing for it from the beginning. The whole Jewish religion had been introductory to it. Judaism was the stock upon which Christianity was engrafted, and the previous existence of Judaism made Christianity possible. Had Christ gone into any heathen nation, and attempted to set up his religion, the attempt would have been wholly abortive. He would have been obliged to have gone back and begun at the beginning, by laying again the foundation of the patriarchal and Mosaic religions. He would have been obliged first to destroy and root up idolatry, and establish the knowledge and worship of the true God. Otherwise, when he told them that he brought them a message from Jehovah, they would have been obliged to ask him who the God was from whom he professed to come. His phraseology would have been altogether new, and he would have been compelled to interpret and explain almost every sentence he uttered. I do not say too much, then, when I affirm that, without the basis of Judaism, the establishment of Christianity would have been impossible. It is true, the Gospel was propagated in heathen lands, but it was at first only through the synagogue. In every considerable city of the Roman empire, the Jews had established their synagogues, and it was into them that the Apostles first entered to preach Christ and Christianity. The Jews first listened, then the proselytes, then the heathen. What would have taken place everywhere without the preface of Judaism, we see by what

happened when Paul accidentally found himself called upon to preach on Mars' Hill, at Athens, to an audience of idolaters and polytheists, unenlightened by one ray of supernatural revelation, though the most intellectual and literary people upon earth. His eloquent discourse, instead of producing conviction, excited nothing but wonder and ridicule and scorn, and he barely escaped a civil prosecution as a setter forth of strange gods.

The Jews were prepared for the mission of Christ, not only by previous knowledge and culture, but by previous expectation. They had been expecting a new order of things for centuries. That new order of things they had denominated "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of Heaven," Heaven being put for God. This phraseology was founded mainly on two passages of the book of Daniel, the first of which is found in the second chapter: "And in the days of these kings *shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom* which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and shall stand for ever." The other is found in the seventh chapter: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like *the Son of Man* came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and *a kingdom*, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The book of Daniel embodies and represents the Messianic

expectations of the Jews, and most of the language current at the time of Christ, concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, is taken from it.

This expectation had become so intense in the time of Christ, that it frequently gave rise to political commotions. The nation was then in a state of bondage, being a conquered province of the Roman Empire. The Jews had lost their independence, and were subjected to the most grinding oppression. Their cities and fortresses were garrisoned by Roman armies, their citizens were subjected to enormous taxation, their temple and their sacred rites were exposed to wanton insult, and the Roman eagles, everywhere conspicuous, were at once the symbols of their national degradation, and of the idolatry which their national religion taught them to hold in utter abomination.

Under these circumstances, the Messiah was expected both as a religious reformer and a temporal monarch. But the pressing evils and calamities of the times led the Jews to fix their hopes on their expected Messiah chiefly in his temporal relations, *as a king*. He was not only to deliver his countrymen from a foreign yoke, but was to carry conquest into foreign lands. It was with this expectation, probably, that the disciples at first followed Christ and attached themselves to his cause. It was evidently with this hope, that Salome, the mother of James and John, during his last journey to Jerusalem, requested of him "that her two sons might sit the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, when he came to the kingdom." And even after his resurrection, his disciples inquired of him, "if he were now about to restore the kingdom to Israel."

The ideas of the Jews in relation to their expected Messiah were theocratical. They looked upon their own nation as under the especial providence and government of God. God had been their Lawgiver at first, and so he was their invisible Sovereign and Ruler perpetually. Their kings ruled only under him. Saul and David were chosen, not by popular election, but by God. God, by his prophet Samuel, anointed them both. When Samuel went to the family of Jesse to choose a king from among his sons, Eliab, his eldest, was first brought before the prophet, and, seeing his commanding appearance, he said: "Surely the Lord's Anointed," in Hebrew, the Lord's Messiah, "is before him." This, in the Greek translation, which had been chiefly in use among the Jews for two hundred years before the time of the Saviour, is rendered *Christos* or Christ. So Samuel in that translation is made to say, "Surely the Lord's Christ is before him."

So, in the second Psalm, one of the kings of Israel seems to be addressed as God's Messiah; in the Greek, *Christos*, or Christ. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed," his Messiah, or Christ, "saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." That this was spoken primarily of one of the kings of Israel appears clearly from the manner in which he is to maintain his authority over the nations. "Thou shalt break them with *a rod of iron*; thou shalt *dash them in pieces* like a potter's vessel." But this king is spoken of in the same Psalm as not only

God's Anointed, but as God's Son. God was the supreme King of Israel, and all the human kings of that nation were said to reign under him. As an earthly monarch exalts to the throne his eldest son, and makes him partner of the power while he yet lives, that he may establish his authority while his own is still vigorous, so is Jehovah represented as raising a king of Israel to the throne, as it were, to sit at his right hand. It is not at all improbable, that the oracle contained in this psalm is alluded to in the one hundred and tenth: "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

In after ages, as the expectation of the Messiah grew more and more intense, these two Psalms were interpreted as prophecies of him. Especially were they so interpreted after the nation was conquered, and groaned under a foreign yoke, for they seemed to promise deliverance from their enemies and vengeance against their oppressors. In the second Psalm, too, the Jews found a strong reason for their expectation of *a conquering Messiah*, in the sentence, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession."

That such expectations were cherished by the Jews concerning their expected Messiah, and that such epithets were applied to him, we have abundant evidence in what was said and done to him at the commencement of his ministry, before his language could have produced any influence on public opinion and popular phraseology. When Nathaniel had been introduced to him as the Messiah, but as the

son of Joseph, and perceived in him the evidence of the possession of miraculous powers, he exclaims: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art *the King of Israel.*" He was to be the king, under God, of the kingdom of heaven. He was to reign first over the Jews, and then, by conquest, over all the nations of the earth.

These preconceived opinions were in great degree erroneous, the meanings attached to this various phraseology were false, and Christ might have repudiated them all, and adopted other modes of speech which were literally and philosophically correct. He was *not* literally to be a king. He was *not* to live in a splendid palace, but, while the foxes had holes and the birds had nests, he was not to have where to lay his head. He was to be clothed in no royal robes, his vesture was to be of the plainest material, and the only crown he was to wear was to be a crown of thorns. He was to have no gorgeous court, composed of the rich, the beautiful, and the gifted, no officers partaking of his splendor and participating in his power, but he was to be surrounded by a few fishermen and peasants, uneducated and unrefined, as poor and humble as himself. But had he *rejected* the current phraseology, he would have thrown away the only means of connecting the old religion with the new, the only material for bridging over the chasm which must intervene between Judaism and Christianity.

He adopted the current phraseology of his countrymen in relation to himself and his mission, and accommodated to it much of his own mode of representation. He spoke of the new dispensation as

"the kingdom of Heaven," and himself as "a king," and some of his most impressive discourses derive no small part of their power to awe the mind from the *regal* drapery with which they are clothed. But as the old conceptions were erroneous, it became necessary for him to clothe the old language with new ideas. He announced that "the kingdom of God was at hand," but then in his first discourse he immediately proceeded to rectify the popular error, and to describe the kingdom of God as something entirely different from what his countrymen had expected.

They expected that their Messiah was to appear as a king, and immediately put himself at the head of the nation, mount the throne of David, fix his court at Jerusalem, re-establish the Jewish religion and theocracy, reform the morals of the nation, drive out the Romans, and conquer and rule the world, as the Romans had done before him; and compel mankind either to adopt the Mosaic religion and become Jews, or to live in a state of subjugation and dependence. In this kingdom, all Jews, from the very nature of the case, were, by right of birth and nationality, to participate. The task of Jesus was to *disabuse* them of their errors in the use of the old phraseology, and gradually to insinuate the truth in their place.

John the Baptist had already begun this work of correction. He had commenced his ministry by proclaiming, "*Repent*, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He told his countrymen, by his rustic imagery, that as Jews they had nothing to expect in the new dispensation. The qualifications for the

Messiah's kingdom were *personal*, not national. "Bring forth fruits *meet for repentance.* And think not to say within yourselves, *We have Abraham to our Father;* for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now the axe lieth at the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire..... Whose fan is in his hand, and he shall thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

These instructions were followed up by the first discourses of Christ, looking in the same direction. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek, the peace-makers, the merciful. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for *theirs* is the kingdom of God." The whole discourse delineates a spiritual religion within the soul of man, not the outward organization of a national government.

Nothing could have been more different than the kingdom of God which the Jews had in their hearts, and that which Christ described and which he came to establish. Their expectations were almost wholly false. Yet nothing could have been more unwise than it would have been for him to have told them so directly. It was the part of wisdom to inform them by degrees, and indirectly by implication. Hence his frequent use of parables. Through them he might indirectly insinuate the truth into their minds, without shocking their prejudices or provoking their resentment. Thus his own disciples,

who originally came to him with ambitious views and purposes, were gradually transformed into spiritual and religious men, and prepared to be the heralds to the world of a pure and spiritual religion; and the crowd who came about him, and from time to time desired to crown him as their king and make him a political adventurer, remained to be edified by his instructions, and to confess that "his word was with power," and that "never man spake like this man." This was his meaning when he explained to his disciples the reason why he spoke to the people in parables. It is *not*, as it might at first seem, that they might not understand him, for in that case he would not have spoken at all. But it was because they could not bear the direct statement of the naked truth. It was that they might receive the truth without offence, that seeing they might see and not perceive, that hearing they might hear and not understand, any further than their prejudices would permit for the time being. Such were his instructions to the plain, rural population of Galilee. When he went up to Jerusalem, he encountered persons of a different stamp, men of learning and culture and intellectual acuteness, such as Nicodemus and the Pharisees.

Nicodemus comes to him, and avows his belief in him as a distinguished prophet. But he comes in the night, and evidently with the idea that he might still remain a Jew and a Jewish magistrate, and yet become a member of the new dispensation, or a subject of "the kingdom of God," if he were not already so by virtue of his birth as a Jew.

He is informed at once, not rudely, coarsely, and

categorically, but gently, delicately, and by implication, that his expectations are erroneous. He is not in the kingdom of God, as he might suppose, by virtue of his birth as a Jew, of the seed of Abraham, nor does the kingdom of God belong to the Jews as a nation. He must be born into it by outward profession and by spiritual renovation. He must be born of water and spirit. The kingdom of God is as invisible as the wind. It is of the mind. It is coincident with no outward, visible organization. It consists not of the seed of Abraham, but of God's spiritual children. And he then goes on to tell the astonished Rabbi, that the Messiah, so far from reigning on earth as a temporal king, is to be "lifted up," like the serpent in the wilderness, to be *crucified*, and to save men, not by the arm of physical strength, but by the power of faith. And more than all this, the true Messiah is not to be a Messiah of conquest; he does not come "to condemn the world," to conquer and destroy the nations, but that the nations may believe on him and be saved.

As the ministry of Jesus advanced, he proceeded gradually, but steadily, to undermine those expectations which the ambition and worldliness of the Jews had led them to fix upon their Messiah, and which they hoped to realize in him. By his teaching, and especially his parables, he opened to their minds the fact, that what they looked for as an outward kingdom was in fact to be a *spiritual religion*. The kingdom of God was to be established, not by violence, by revolution, or by conquest, but by *moral* means. It was to *grow* as the grain of mustard seed grows, from being the smallest of all seeds,

to become a tree, so that the fowls of heaven come and lodge in the branches of it. It was to spread abroad, not with force and noise and commotion, but as a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Towards the latter end of his ministry, it was inquired of him directly when the kingdom whose advent he proclaimed should come, when it should assume an outward form and manifestation; and he plainly told the inquirers, that there was to be nothing of the kind; that his kingdom was to have nothing of a temporal, worldly, or material character, but related entirely to the hidden man of the heart. There was to be no gathering together to him as to a military leader or worldly monarch, and he cautions his followers against those false Christs who should attempt to make such a demonstration. "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is *within you.* And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it." When these political troubles should come on, which were to end in the destruction of the Jewish people, they would earnestly desire the personal presence, guidance, and protection of the Messiah, and they would be tempted to run after this impostor and that, who should give out that he was the expected deliverer; but they were to give no heed, for there

was to be *no personal, local manifestation*, but the coming of the Son of Man was to be like the lightning, undoubted in its certainty, not local in its manifestation, but illuminating equally a wide extent of country, and shining around the whole horizon. "And they shall say to you, See here! or, See there! go not after them nor follow them. *For* as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, and shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in his day."

The time at length came, however, when he was compelled to be more explicit. The national disappointment of the Jews in Jesus as their expected Messiah led to his rejection, and persecution as an impostor. His spiritual teaching, his open rebukes of the vices of the age, and his denunciation of those in power, stirred up an enmity to him that could be appeased only with his blood. It was easy enough to obtain his condemnation before the Jewish council, for most of them hated him cordially. But they had not the power of life and death, and it was necessary, in order to destroy him, to obtain the concurrence of the Roman governor. There was some difficulty in doing this, for the Roman governor knew little or nothing of the peculiarities of their religion, or of their private grievances against Jesus. It was necessary to convict him of a capital offence against the Roman Empire. The readiest way to do this was to prove that he had pretended to be *a king*, and thus had been guilty of treason. This accusation of sedition they did not hesitate to make, though they knew it to be utterly groundless,— though they knew that he had

repeatedly refused to be made a king, when he might have done so. In this accusation they had a double purpose. They intended to bring Christ into an inextricable dilemma. In professing to be the Messiah according to the Jewish conceptions, he had claimed to be "King of Israel," which was one of the titles of the Messiah. If, to escape the accusation of sedition against the Romans, he had denied that he was a king, then the Jews would have had it to say, that, when brought to the test, and in peril of his life, he renounced the very claim he had set up, and was, after all, not the Messiah he had professed to be.

This ensnaring accusation was made against Christ, not in his presence, but in his absence. When brought before Pilate, he was taken into the judgment-hall, but his accusers could not enter, for fear of being defiled. Pilate therefore went out to them, in order to learn the charges brought against the prisoner. The accusation was, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that *he himself is Christ, a king.*" "Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?"

From the avowal that he was a king, though wholly untrue in the sense of the accusation, Jesus could not shrink, without apparent contradiction, without abandoning the position he had assumed. He therefore explained himself, by declaring what

his kingdom was not. "Jesus answered, *My kingdom is not of this world;* if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."

This would have been sufficient in justice to escape the charge of sedition, and here the matter might have rested. But Pilate goes on to inquire how he could be a king, and still have no earthly kingdom. "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?" The answer of Christ is sublimely wise and sublimely true, and furnishes the key to all the regal phraseology which Jesus applied to himself, from the beginning of the Gospel to the end. "Thou sayest well that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that *I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" As much as if he had said: "Truth is the true sovereign of the human mind and the true ruler of mankind. It is irresistible, it is universal. Every good and true man obeys it, and precisely to the measure of his goodness and truth. I am the organ and the instrument of establishing the truth in the earth. I am its witness, and shall be its martyr. It transcends the limits of time and space. Its empire extends wherever man is man. Its dominion, therefore, may spread from sea to sea, and from shore to shore. Its dominion may be universal and perpetual; for truth is as eternal as the soul of man."

Finally, the figure of the new dispensation as the kingdom of heaven, and himself as its king under God, becomes the source of the scenic sublimity of

Christ's description of the final judgment. In Oriental countries, at the time of Christ, the institution of civil government had never advanced beyond its primitive, simple, patriarchal form. There was no division, as there has been in the western world, in more advanced stages of culture and civilization, of the functions of government into the legislative, the judicial, and executive. The sovereign was everything, lawgiver, judge, and executive. All these functions were implied and comprehended in the very name of king. Christ, while on earth, as the king and head of the kingdom of Heaven, promulgated his laws; he laid down the principles of his government. It was necessary, in order to complete the functions of a king, that he should represent himself as a *judge*. He had declared what actions should be rewarded and what punished, what dispositions should prepare the soul for the society of himself and the saints in light, and what must necessarily banish their possessor into the companionship of the vile. He therefore proceeds to predict the final issue of things under various figures. At one time, the kingdom of Heaven is a *feast*, at which the faithful shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but the unworthy shall be shut out in outer darkness. At another time it is a *bridal supper*, to which the watchful and diligent came early and were admitted, but the negligent and the slothful came late, and were excluded. At another, it is *a wedding feast*, to which one came without a wedding garment, and was cast out. To sum up all in one tremendous scene, and set forth by the most impressive representation the winding up of this

world's probation, he represents himself to be, as he had been the lawgiver, so likewise the judge of mankind. He selects one virtue as the representative of the whole character, one grace as the pledge of the existence of all the rest; that *love* which is the fulfilling of the Law, that regarding of our neighbor as ourselves, which is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as the criterion of fitness for heavenly joy.

"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, *then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.* And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the KING say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee, or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in, or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the KING shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them

on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

I ought, perhaps, in conclusion, to say, that there is a diversity of opinion as to the meaning of this scenic representation. By most interpreters, it has been made to refer to the final judgment of all mankind. In that case, it must include those who had lived and died before Christianity was introduced, and the stress of the thought turns on the assembling of the whole human race before the throne of the Judge.

There are strong objections, it is said, to this view of things. It involves the conception, either of the sleep of the soul for ages and centuries, or its conscious existence in the unseen world for an equal length of time, unjudged and uncertain of its final condition. Either of these suppositions is naturally improbable.

Then it is to be observed, that the condition of the persons judged is made to turn on the manner

in which they have received and treated Christ's disciples, who seem to be introduced under the designation of "these my brethren." It is therefore thought by many, that Christ refers in this dramatic prophecy to the *results* which will attend the reception or the rejection of his religion in the world, and the good or ill treatment of those whom he sends forth to teach it to the nations. Those who receive his Apostles, and the glorious religion they teach, shall be for ever blessed and happy, and those nations or individuals who reject the Gospel, and maltreat its ministers, shall suffer untold miseries, here and hereafter.

These diversities of opinion, however, do not affect the subject of this Discourse, the figure of speech by which Christ denominates himself a King. It is as the Promulgator of the Truth and Law of God, by which mankind ought to be governed, and by which they are hereafter to be judged.

DISCOURSE XXI.

CHRIST A KING.

JESUS ANSWERED, MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD: IF MY KINGDOM WERE OF THIS WORLD, THEN WOULD MY SERVANTS FIGHT, THAT I SHOULD NOT BE DELIVERED TO THE JEWS: BUT NOW IS MY KINGDOM NOT FROM HENCE. PILATE THEREFORE SAID UNTO HIM, ART THOU A KING THEN? JESUS ANSWERED, THOU SAYEST WELL THAT I AM A KING. TO THIS END WAS I BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE TRUTH. EVERY ONE THAT IS OF THE TRUTH HEARETH MY VOICE. — John xviii. 36, 37.

I GAVE, in one of the preceding Discourses, some remarks on the relation of Moses and the Jewish dispensation to the age. I endeavored to show that the Mosaic institutions were shaped to meet the condition and the wants of the infancy of the world. Religion has no necessary connection with any form of civil government. Yet Moses, when he established a religion, established a government, not because there is any necessary connection between the two, but because the Israelites, having been slaves, had no nationality and no civil government, and were about, for religion's sake, to commence a

national existence. It was a rude and barbarous age, and therefore sacrifices were adopted or retained. Church and state were united, because neither of them was strong enough to stand alone.

The rites of that religion were imposing, gorgeous, magnificent, because nothing else could command the reverence of barbarians, nothing else could impress a coarse, uncultivated people. A tabernacle glittering with gold, an altar consuming a sacrifice with sacred fire, kindled miraculously from heaven, or rolling up a cloud of incense towards heaven, while the assembled multitude prostrated themselves on the ground, and offered up their devotions with the consuming sacrifice, might be best calculated to kindle the enthusiasm and engage the affections of a people without intellectual culture, and unaccustomed to thought and reflection. A national feast, in which provision was made for social and physical gratification, might be necessary to secure the allegiance of a people incapable of refined, intellectual, and spiritual enjoyment.

But in the natural and providential advancement of the world, the time must come when all these things would be outgrown. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Fifteen hundred years intervened between Moses and Christ, and in the mean time the world was making constant progress. Great empires had arisen, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, the Roman, and had invented a complete system of jurisprudence. The whole civilized world was at the time of Christ under the govern-

ment of the Romans. They had a code of laws and a system of government which had been in the process of formation seven hundred and fifty years. Some ages after, it was reduced to a systematic form, it has been preserved, and now exerts a great influence upon the legislation of the world. It was based on natural right, and grew out of actual experience. To have enacted civil laws in connection with the Christian religion would have been *superfluous*, as well as impracticable. Christ then, in promulgating a new religion, was able to separate it entirely from the state. He himself assumed no civil function, and when appealed to to decide a matter of property, he promptly declined the office, saying, "Who made me a ruler and divider over you?" At another, when called on to determine a political question, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, involving the right and the duty of preserving their nationality as Jews, at all hazards, he gave the memorable response: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

This answer shows, that, in his exalted wisdom, he now perceived that the time had at length come when church and state might be safely separated. The objects of the Jewish nationality were now accomplished, Judaism itself would soon be done away, and his own religion, which was purely spiritual, was about to be ushered in, which could live and sanctify mankind under *all* forms of civil government.

Indeed, this severance of religion from secular affairs was absolutely necessary to Christianity as a universal religion. Christ himself claimed to be

"the Light of the world." There was to be nothing local or national in his institutions. To the woman of Samaria he said: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall *neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father*. . . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." On another occasion he said: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be *one fold and one shepherd*." We see often in his teaching, that he bore about with him the consciousness that his mission was *universal*, and that his Gospel should be diffused all over the earth. Of the woman who poured the precious ointment on his head, he said: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached *in the whole world*, there shall also this which this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." By this we perceive that he carried with him the anticipation, or rather the consciousness, that his religion was to be preached in the whole world. It was to have no Jerusalem, no Gerizim, no nationality; its centre was to be everywhere, and its circumference nowhere. There was to be in it no central temple, as in Judaism. Every place where God was worshipped was a consecrated spot, throughout the earth.

The altered condition of the world, then, enabled Christ to omit everything of a secular, a local, and a civil character, and promulgate a purely spiritual

and a universal religion. But if Christ refused the seat of a civil magistrate, it was only to ascend a higher throne. He who shapes the civil institutions of a nation may do much for their good. Numa, Solon, Draco, Lycurgus, did this for the Romans, the Athenians, the Lacedæmonians. Their individual and national character was for ages influenced by these institutions. The mission and the destiny of these nations on earth was, in a manner, fixed by the arbitrary arrangements of one man.

This is unquestionably a great power, through outward circumstances to shape and control the inward man, to make a nation literary or uncultivated, fond of war or peace, given to ambition or pleasure, preparing them to be the conquerors of the world or the quiet and gentle cultivators of the soil. This has often been done, in no small degree, by one man. The action of one mind has often given object and direction to the minds of millions through long centuries.

But there is a power greater than this, *that which addresses itself immediately to the soul itself*, and through the soul controls and shapes all outward things. *This is the power of moral and spiritual truth.* To this power the soul owes an immediate and unconditional allegiance. I cannot resist it any more than I can the overpowering light of the sun. Before it, I am dumb and submissive. I feel that it is the natural sovereign of the world. It commands my assent. If I am a rational being, it controls my actions. To gainsay it is folly, to rebel against it is madness. No weapon formed against it can prosper. A life not conformed to it must end in utter

discomfiture, and a single action which sets it at defiance is so much subtracted from the sum total of our happiness.

To this throne of truth, Christ ascended when he became the teacher of the world. "Thou sayest well that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

When he commenced his ministry, and multitudes began to gather about him from all parts of Judæa, so that the synagogues could no longer contain them, and he began to preach in the open air; when he went up into a mountain, that a greater assembly might hear his voice; when he opened his mouth and taught them, delivering that wonderful discourse, which is denominated "the Sermon on the Mount," — he began to exert, on a grand scale, his kingly power. The force of those words was resistless. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, the peacemakers, the merciful, the pure in heart. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Though every word was death to their Jewish hopes and their worldly expectations, that vast multitude bowed down before the simple majesty of truth, and confessed that "his word was with power"; they found the simple teacher of Nazareth, when seated in the chair of instruction, to be clothed with an authority infinitely higher and deeper and broader than he could have derived from

a kingly throne and surrounding hosts of armed men. The words he uttered did not set armies in motion, did not direct the physical energies of men, and send them forth to conquer nations, to build cities, to extend commerce, to establish governments, to cultivate the arts, but they had power to penetrate, convict, and regenerate the soul. That voice had power to convert the sinful and raise the spiritually dead, to pierce the sepulchre, where virtue had lain in the sleep of oblivion, incrusted with a load of worldliness and depravity, and waken man to a new and better life.

To all, those words were irresistible, but to those who came with fair minds and right moral dispositions they carried internal proof of coming from God. They appealed to what is best and highest and holiest in our nature. As Christ himself declared, "*He that will do his will* shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Once uttered, those words could never die. Christ did not write them down, nor did he take any care that they should be immediately recorded. But he truly said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." The truths he taught are spiritual and universal. Wherever man is man, they apply to his mind, his heart, his life. They are indeed differently reported by different Evangelists, but still in substance they are the same in all. And when committed to writing, they are the same to the end of time, their authority is unexhausted, because they are *the truth*, to which the human mind owes a natural and unalienable allegiance.

Moses, in order to introduce the true religion into the world and maintain it there, was compelled to commit it to the guardianship of one peculiar people. He was obliged to provide for their national existence, to have bounds and limits and a common centre, where all religious influences should converge as if to a focus, and from which they might radiate as from a common centre. He was compelled to enact corresponding civil laws and institutions. He found it necessary to enforce religious duties by civil penalties. But when the fulness of time had come, and the world had been advancing for fifteen hundred years, it became possible for Christ to establish a purely spiritual kingdom, *the empire of truth.* His sceptre was his word, his ministers were his Apostles, and wherever they spread his Gospel, they spread his power. Commanding thus the souls and the spiritual nature of men, Christ was placed at the very fountain-head of power, and mounted a throne higher than the kings of the earth. Then he sat on the throne of his glory, and before him were assembled all nations, and, as the King of truth, he distributed happiness or woe to them as they obeyed or disobeyed his commandments. Ever since, Christ has in this sense been ruling the world, he has been exalted to be King of kings and Lord of lords. Wherever his Gospel is preached, it asserts the same authority and exerts the same power. The highest and the lowest are equally subjected to his dominion.

The outward humility of Christ was no obstruction to his spiritual power, and he exercised an immeasurable sway during his short ministry, though

he traversed the plains of Judæa as a wayfaring man, and had not where to lay his head. So at the present hour, the humblest teacher who preaches the true Gospel, in the right spirit, partakes of his authority, and perpetuates his power.

I come, in the last place, to speak of the change in the condition of the world, which made such a spiritual kingdom possible. In the days of Moses it would have been wholly impracticable. Men become capable of different species of government as they emerge from barbarism, and advance in civilization and refinement, — as their moral, intellectual, and spiritual faculties become developed. In a state of barbarism, *physical force* and *fear* are the only motives by which men can be governed. Immediate physical suffering is the only penalty which can deter men from transgression. Even God's law must be clothed with terror, and must be promulgated amidst consuming flames and rolling thunders. God's presence is symbolized by a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night; and his especial dwelling is in the dark apartment and amidst the mysterious silence of the Holy of Holies.

As man advances, other principles are developed and made predominant, and he becomes capable of being governed by other and higher motives. A broader comprehension of human relations and human rights induces him to appreciate and reverence the majesty of justice, and feel the moral enormity of violence and wrong. A progressive refinement creates an abhorrence of the degradation of sensuality. A cultivated sensibility generates the feeling of human brotherhood, and leads men away from

self, and teaches them "to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep." A higher intellectual culture enables men to comprehend and apply general principles, as well as particular precepts; then the whole law, originally spread out into specific enactments and minute details, may be summed in a few comprehensive commandments; such as, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself"; "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you."

Above all, as mankind advance in intellectual, moral, and spiritual culture, power is transferred from physical force to moral excellence, and a wise and good man rises to his rightful dominion. To a certain extent, his word becomes law, his opinion is authority, his example the ideal of humanity. In such an age appeared Jesus Christ, and concentrated in himself all the elements of moral and spiritual power, — a wisdom such as all the sages of the earth had never approached, which looked through heaven above and earth beneath, which penetrated alike the future and the past, which comprehended and laid open all the relations of man to God, to himself, and his fellow-man.

With prophetic eye he saw the seats of blessedness and the regions of despair. In himself he exhibited the moral miracle of a sinless life. One appeared in human form, whose word was infallible, and his every act without stain. It was without presumption that he ascended the throne of universal dominion, that he assumed to be the lawgiver of the nations, and the oracle of all time.

His claim was sealed by miraculous attestation, and men learned to look on him as the shrine of indwelling Divinity; and the Apostle John spoke the reverence of his heart when he called him the incarnate Word of God. The world acquiesced in his authority when he rose from the dead, and, before he ascended to heaven, commissioned his Apostles to go and teach all nations, enjoining upon them whatsoever he had commanded them. "And lo," said he, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

How well Jesus understood the nature of his kingly power, appears from his language on several occasions. At one time he said to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Consider how wonderfully this promise was fulfilled. How marvellously were these disciples elevated by their connection with Jesus! Had they never seen him, they would have passed their lives in the obscure towns of Galilee, known to few, having little power over any, and exerting very little influence in the world, and their names, when a few years had passed, would have been lost from the history of the world.

But in consequence of their few years of discipleship to Jesus, and those powers with which they were intrusted from on high, they went out into the world men of might. They produced at once a great sensation. Peter's first discourse converts three thousand, induces them to forsake Judaism, the cher-

ished religion of their fathers, and commence a new and more spiritual life. This is perhaps the highest influence that one human being can exert upon another, — to induce him to change his character and his habits. Royal power cannot accomplish this. An earthly monarch exerts great sway in the earth, but it is merely superficial. He controls men's external actions. He does not alter their convictions, he does not induce them to act from new motives. He soon passes away. The peculiar institutions he has founded fall to decay, for another king reigns in his place, and claims the right of moulding the world according to his ideas.

Not so with the Apostles. They exercised the power through the Gospel of *spiritual regeneration*. They formed churches, which were collections of men and women whose object of association was the attainment of a divine and holy life. The words of these Apostles were committed to writing, and they have been the law of the world ever since. Through the records of the New Testament, the Apostles sit on Christ's throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And no otherwise is it now. The Christian ministry is the greatest power on earth. I do not mean the Church as an outward institution. I do not mean that vast hierarchy, which came into existence in the Middle Ages, and built itself a worldly throne higher than the kings of the earth. I mean the power of the pulpit and Christian ordinances in Protestant countries.

A majority of the population attend church on the Sabbath, many from childhood to old age. There

they are instructed under the most favorable auspices. The rest of the Sabbath frees their hands from toil, and their minds in a great measure from care. They come to listen to the Gospel, at the same time that they worship God; and the Gospel teaches them to know the God whom they worship.

Such perpetual inculcation, in the course of years, makes them acquainted with the whole round of their duty; it forms their opinions, even on subjects not immediately connected with religion; it shapes their sentiments; it settles their principles of action. In short, what is done on the Sabbath in Christian churches makes Christendom what it is. All those who faithfully preach the Gospel in Christian lands may be said to sit with Christ on his throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; they partake of Christ's power, and spread it abroad.

All this is direct and immediate. There is another power of Christ, which is indirect and incidental. It is exerted through literature. There is in every civilized community a certain class of intellectual and literary men, whose employment it is to operate immediately upon the public mind through their writings. The power of this class of men increases as literature and intelligence become more diffused. There is scarcely a limit to be set to their influence.

In a Christian country, the minds of these men, whether they are sensible of it or not, become imbued with Christian principles and sentiments, though they may not be religious men. In fact, the very language in which they write has become pervaded, we may say saturated, with Christianity. That language was born and baptized into Chris-

tianity; its very words have derived their meaning from the precepts and the spirit of Christ. He who uses them, though without any theological intention, preaches a species of Gospel, which commands the conscience and controls the actions of mankind.

Thus it is that Christ is King of the world, through the truth he uttered, by the precepts he gave, by the life he led, by the sufferings he endured, by the credentials he brought.

DISCOURSE XXII.

JESUS THE SON OF GOD.

AND DECLARED TO BE THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. — Romans i. 4.

In the phraseology of the New Testament there is nothing more important, or which has had a greater influence upon the opinions of Christendom, than the epithet "Son of God," when applied to Jesus of Nazareth. It is the purpose of this Discourse to consider its import. In doing so I shall first investigate the matter historically; I shall first examine what was the meaning of this epithet before and at the advent of Christ. Secondly, What was it during the ministry of Christ and his Apostles? And thirdly, What has it been in after ages?

The introduction which we have in the New Testament to the state of things which existed in Judæa at the appearance of Jesus Christ, is exceedingly abrupt. Nearly four hundred years elapsed unrecorded between the close of the book of Malachi and the opening of the Gospel of Matthew. What took place in that long period is recorded

only by profane historians, and in them we have very little relating to the religious opinions or expectations of the Jews.

We do know that a strong expectation of a Messiah had been formed, and about the period of the birth of Jesus had become intense. *A peculiar phraseology in relation to the expected one had been adopted.* Epithets derived from various passages in the Old Testament had been applied to him. With them we meet almost as soon as we open the Evangelical narrative. He was called before his advent "the Son of David," "the King of Israel," "the Messiah," "the Christ" or the Anointed, "the Son of Man," and "the Son of God." All these phrases are synonymous and are Judaic, derived from the condition and relations of the Jewish people as under *a theocracy*, the immediate government of God, through kings and priests, who were consecrated to office by being *anointed*, according to divine direction, with oil.

The Jews were led to expect their Messiah mainly in the capacity of a king. Among the Jews, and all Oriental nations, kings were considered as sustaining a peculiar relation to God. There were many reasons for this. They were exalted by God's providence to a station of *great power and influence.* They were the *instruments* of God of great good or evil to mankind. In the possession of great power, for good or for evil, they *resembled* God. Hence they are called not only "sons of God," but "gods," as in the eighty-second Psalm. "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods"; that is, kings or magistrates. "How long

will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you children," literally sons, "of the Most High; but ye shall die like men, and perish as one of the people."

In the eighty-ninth Psalm, David, in his capacity of the king of Israel, is thus spoken of in his relation to God: "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him; with whom my hand shall be established; mine arm also shall strengthen him..... He shall cry unto me, *Thou art my Father*, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Also I will make him *my first-born*, higher than the kings of the earth."

Here it is readily perceived that *all kings* are considered, by their office, to be "sons of God," and David has a pre-eminence over them in God's regard, as the first-born son has in those countries where the rights of primogeniture are maintained.

After this explanation, it is easy to see the bearing of the second Psalm, as having been composed primarily concerning David in relation to surrounding kings. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us..... Yet have I set *my king* upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, *Thou art my Son;* this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Such is the phraseology of the Old Testament in

relation to kings, and the kings of Israel especially. In after ages, this Psalm was interpreted to relate to the expected Messiah, and hence he was called, previous to his advent, not only "King of Israel," but "Son of God," in virtue of being king of Israel. In this relation, *it had no reference to the metaphysical rank or nature of the person to whom it was applied*, but it only related to the *kingly office*. The same species of phraseology is used by the prophet Nathan to David, concerning Solomon. David desired to build a temple to God, but was forbidden by the prophet Nathan, with a promise that his son should accomplish what he was not allowed to undertake. "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish his kingdom for ever. I will be *his father*, and he shall be *my son*. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before me." Thus we perceive, that the title "Son of God" is applied both to David and Solomon, in virtue of their being *kings of Israel*.

With these facts, we come down to the actual history of the New Testament. Immediately after the inauguration of Jesus as the Messiah by John, in the Jordan, by his baptism and the descent of the Holy Ghost, Jesus commenced his ministry by calling his disciples. The call of Philip is thus recorded:

"The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, *We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write*, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and said unto him, Rabbi, *thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.* Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

It is easy to perceive from this extract, that the Jews of that age expected a Messiah; that Philip, after he had been called by Jesus, considered him to be that personage, still supposing him to be the son of Joseph; and that two of the epithets applied to him were "Son of God" and "King of Israel," and that in the mind of Nathaniel the epithet "Son of God" had no relation to Christ's metaphysical nature.

During the ministry of Christ and his Apostles, the same views seem to have been entertained.

After Christ had exercised his ministry for a considerable time, and had exhibited to his disciples and to the world his credentials, he one day asked them whom they took him to be. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That these phrases are synonymous, and both were epithets of the Messiah and nothing more, is evident from the manner in which the same declaration is recorded by the other two Evangelists, Mark and Luke, who have likewise introduced it. They have both omitted the phrase "Son of God" altogether. Mark reports that he simply said, "Thou art the Christ," and Luke, "Thou art the Christ of God." Now, if these phrases had not been synonymous, and especially if the epithet "Son of God" had added anything, or contained a meaning not expressed in the other epithet, "the Christ," or "the Christ of God," Mark and Luke would certainly not have omitted it. The Gospels were used at first by different churches, and it was long before they were collected into a volume. If there were any difference in the meaning of these phrases, there would have been a difference of doctrine in the different churches. One would have been taught that Jesus was simply the Messiah, and the other, that he was something more.

The same conclusion is to be drawn from the account which Luke gives of the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrim. "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not be-

lieve; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall *the Son of Man* sit on the right hand of the power of God." The phrase "Son of Man" was likewise an epithet of the Messiah, derived from the seventh chapter of Daniel, in which it is said: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like *the Son of Man* came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom," &c. To this passage, which was interpreted by the Jews of their expected Messiah, Christ intended to allude, and to apply it to himself. He was understood to do so by the council, as will appear by what follows. "Then said they all, *Art* thou *then the Son of God?* And he said unto them, Ye say truth, for I am."

On one occasion he was accused of applying this epithet to himself on other grounds, grounds touching his metaphysical nature. He repudiated the idea, and placed the use of the term on the basis of his official character, and not of his essential nature. "The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, ... say ye of him *whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world*, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe

that the Father is in me and I in him." The ground upon which he here puts the application of the epithet "Son of God" to himself, is not his *nature*, but his *mission*, his having been "*sanctified* and *sent* into the world," of which mission his miracles were the appropriate and satisfactory proof; and the point of belief in him as the Son of God is not the relation of having been derived from the divine essence in a peculiar manner, but of God's dwelling in him and acting through him.

Apposite to our subject is Christ's last prayer with his disciples. In it he applies the title "Son of God" to himself, and it is very easy to perceive in what sense. It is that of his Messianic dignity, his universal commission and authority. That commission was spiritual, and it consisted in giving eternal life or happiness to all mankind. The instrument of that power and the means of that blessing were the knowledge of the true God, and himself as the revealer of God's will. "Father, the hour is come: glorify *thy Son*, that thy Son may also glorify thee." What the glory was to which he here alludes, may be learned from another passage. It is the extension of his spiritual kingdom to all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, as is seen in the following passage.

On one occasion certain Greeks desired to be introduced to Jesus. When informed of it he said, "The hour is come when *the Son of Man should be glorified.* Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." As long as Christ lived, the universality of

his mission could not be understood. He would be received only by his countrymen, and by them as merely a Jewish Messiah, come for the purpose of establishing a universal Jewish monarchy. His death dissipated that hope, and his resurrection and ascension revealed the fact that his kingdom was not of this world,—that it was spiritual and universal, belonging alike to Jew and Gentile.

Hence the significance of the next expression of his prayer: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." As my kingdom is universal, so let my nominal subjects be my subjects indeed. "As thou hast given me the world for my kingdom, so let my spiritual kingdom be coextensive with the world." This petition carries us back to the second Psalm, universally interpreted by the Jews of the Messiah: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." And what else is Christianity itself, as it has been promulgated among the nations, but the knowledge of the true God, taught in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, as his authenticated messenger?

"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." What that work was, he proceeds to define in the next verse but one: "I have *manifested thy name* unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." I have made thee known to my disciples, that they

may impart the same knowledge to others. "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This is often interpreted to mean: "Restore me to the glory which I had in thy presence in a pre-existent state." But this sense does not suit the connection, and, besides, would be a selfish, ambitious prayer, entirely foreign to the character of Christ. Moreover, he afterwards says: "And the glory which thou gavest me, *I have given them.*" This could not be a glory which he had had in the presence of God in a pre-existent state. The glory, therefore, for which he prays, it seems more rational to suppose, was the glory of *success in his mission*, which was the salvation of the world. The mission and kingdom of Christ had been a prominent purpose of God from the beginning, from the ages of eternity, according to the Jewish conceptions. Paul speaks of it in terms like these: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure *which he hath purposed in himself;* that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ..... Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no

hope, and without God in the world; but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In another place: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, ... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel, ... *according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

This is the glory, as it would seem according to the connection, which Christ had with God before the foundation of the world; this purpose that he should be *the instrument of promulgating a universal religion*, which should embrace both Jews and Gentiles, and make them one body, and the members of one Church. This was the power which God had given him over all flesh. This glory he communicated to his disciples by teaching them his doctrines, and by associating them with himself as the founders of this universal religion, — by giving them the words which God had given him.

Such, as it would seem, is the force of the epithet "Son of God," when appropriated by Christ to himself. It refers not at all to his metaphysical nature, but to his office as the Messiah. It is accommodated to the Jewish ideas of their theocracy, in which the Messiah was to reign as God's vicegerent.

To this view of things corresponds precisely the introduction of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, from which the text is taken. "Paul, a servant of Jesus

Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be *the Son of God* with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead.*"

His resurrection demonstrated his office as the Messiah, for his mission was finally staked on the occurrence of that fact. It did not demonstrate his metaphysical nature to be this or that. If it had any bearing upon that matter, it showed him to be human; for the capacity of dying is one of the marks of mortal man, and his resurrection is appealed to as the evidence of a universal resurrection; and this same Apostle affirms: "As by man came death, *so by man came the resurrection of the dead.*"

In an address made at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul develops his conception of the manner in which the resurrection of Christ was a demonstration of his sonship. "But God raised him from the dead; and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that *he hath raised up Jesus again;* as it is also written in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son*, this day have I begotten thee."

The begetting and the sonship here spoken of can have no reference to Christ's essential nature, for

Christ did not *begin to exist* when he rose from the dead. But his resurrection did, in a measure, inaugurate him as the Messiah; it demonstrated him to be that great personage which the Jews expected. From that moment his kingdom began to be established, a kingdom not confined to the Jews, but extending to every land, embracing every tribe and nation upon earth.

Such was the meaning of the epithet "Son of God," when applied to Jesus of Nazareth, in the days of Christ and his Apostles. It was a synonyme for Messiah, and nothing more. It had *no* reference whatever to Christ's metaphysical nature. It is true, that John in his Gospel added another idea, that of *nearness, confidence,* and *endearment.* He calls Christ the "*only-begotten* Son of God." At first sight this would seem to indicate a peculiar and especial derivation from God. But the ground of such a conclusion vanishes, when we examine the contemporaneous use of the word rendered *only-begotten.* Its primary meaning was the literal one, that of *an only son* of a human father. But, like many, nay, most words, it acquired a secondary and figurative signification. An only son usually becomes an object of intense and peculiar affection. An *only* son was naturally, and almost necessarily, a *well-beloved* son. Hence "only-begotten" became an epithet of *endearment.* In the time of Christ, for one person to call another "his son" was a title of endearment, but to call him "his only son" was a title of intense affection. Thus Paul calls Timothy, not only his *son,* but his *genuine* or true son. The same language he likewise uses of Titus. This, of course,

indicates no *natural* relation between the parties, but only of *affection, obligation, confidence.*

That it was a phrase of endearment appears from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. There the writer says: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his *only-begotten son.*" Isaac was not his only-begotten son. He had another son, Ishmael, who was just as much his son as Isaac. That it was considered as a term of endearment by the Jews who spoke the Greek language appears from the fact, that, in the translation of the Old Testament into Greek made by the Jews themselves, the same word rendered by the author of the Hebrews *only-begotten* is translated *well-beloved.*

No ideas involving sex can have any application to God, and all language derived from sexual relations can be only metaphorical. God is a spirit, and when he is called Father, it is only in an analogical sense. The only derivation from God is by *creation,* and all literal application of human relations to him leads the human mind into the most serious misapprehension.

Had the administration of Christianity remained in the hands of Jews or converts from Judaism, their Hebrew education, their strict ideas of the unity and spirituality of God, and their knowledge of the force of Hebrew phraseology, would have prevented them from receiving from the epithet "Son of God" any other than its Jewish significance, as a designation of the Messiah.

But Christianity did not long remain under the administration of Jews. It soon fell into the hands

of converted Pagans. Jerusalem and the Jewish nation were destroyed about the close of the apostolic age. The Jewish branch of the Church lost its standing and influence, and its pure theology lost ground in a corresponding degree.

The fathers of the Church in the succeeding ages were Greeks and Romans by extraction and education. Few of them could even read the Hebrew language, and of course were strangers to Hebrew ideas, idioms, and phraseology.

They had no strict ideas of the unity of God, their minds were clouded by Oriental speculations of Divine emanations, which preceded the creation of the world, and with the Platonic notion of a division of God into various attributes and manifestations; and, making a complete shipwreck of the Divine unity, they put heathen meanings upon Jewish phraseology, and interpreted the epithet "Son of God" of Christ's metaphysical nature.

In the Old Testament Wisdom is spoken of as a person, and as having existed with God before the creation of the world. In the book of Proverbs, Wisdom is introduced as speaking: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water, then was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

No personification could be stronger than this, and yet no real person was intended. So in the

New Testament that divine wisdom and power which were manifested in Jesus were denominated the Word, or the Word of God. In the first chapter of John's Gospel, he says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; not a *person* with God, but an attribute personified, which was nothing else than God himself. But putting these four expressions together, "wisdom," "brought forth," "Word," and "Son," the early Christian Fathers, who were all converts from heathenism, and who knew no better than to suppose that one Deity might be derived from another, fabricated the strange doctrine, that the sonship of Christ, instead of being the title of an office, was the name of the *divine nature* of Christ, which was derived from God before the creation of the world.

At the time of Justin Martyr, one hundred and forty years after Christ, the doctrine concerning Christ's sonship had assumed this shape. "God," says he, "in the beginning, before anything was created, begat a Rational Power from himself which is called by the Holy Ghost, Glory of the Lord, and sometimes Son, Wisdom, Angel, Lord, Logos; sometimes also he calls him Leader. In the form of a man he appeared unto Joshua, the son of Nun. All the above names he bears, because he ministers to the will of the Father, and was begotten by the will of the Father."

But the word "Logos" not only means speech, but reason; and thus, though the Word became the Son of God, when God created the universe by his word, still as his reason he was always in

him, and of course was coeternal. Thus we see a *title* gradually transformed by the human imagination into a *person*, and that person conceived of as dating his being before the foundation of the world, and as having been derived from the very substance of the Deity.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

AND THEY TRULY WERE MANY PRIESTS, BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT SUFFERED TO CONTINUE BY REASON OF DEATH: BUT THIS MAN, BECAUSE HE CONTINUETH EVER, HATH AN UNCHANGEABLE PRIESTHOOD. WHEREFORE HE IS ABLE ALSO TO SAVE THEM TO THE UTTERMOST THAT COME UNTO GOD BY HIM, SEEING HE EVER LIVETH TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM. FOR SUCH AN HIGH-PRIEST BECAME US, WHO IS HOLY, HARMLESS, UNDEFILED, SEPARATE FROM SINNERS, AND MADE HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS; WHO NEEDETH NOT DAILY, AS THOSE HIGH-PRIESTS, TO OFFER UP SACRIFICE, FIRST FOR HIS OWN SINS, AND THEN FOR THE PEOPLE'S: FOR THIS HE DID ONCE, WHEN HE OFFERED UP HIMSELF. — Hebrews vii. 23-27.

We are accustomed to hear much in Christian teaching of *the priesthood of Christ*, and it is represented as being one of *the fundamental doctrines* of Christianity. It is the purpose of this Discourse to inquire on what language of the New Testament this impression is founded. Is that language literal or figurative, primary or analogical, declaratory or illustrative? Is it found in the Gospels, and is it the language of Christ himself? or is it found in

the Epistles, or a single Epistle? Is it addressed to all Christians, or only to a single class of them?

Let any person who wishes to examine this subject take up a common concordance, and he will find that Christ is spoken of as *a priest* only in one portion of the New Testament, and that is the Epistle to the Hebrews. In other parts of the New Testament he is called a *sacrifice*, but nowhere else is he called a priest and a sacrifice too, by virtue of the fact that he sacrificed himself. The question arises, *Why* is he called a priest, or a high-priest, in that Epistle, and nowhere else?

In order satisfactorily to answer this question, we shall inquire, in the first place, What was priesthood, and what was a high-priest, in the minds of those to whom this Epistle was addressed? In the early ages of the world, public religious services consisted mainly of sacrifices. Religious teaching made no part of them. There was, then, no Bible to teach from; the Law of Moses even was not given. There was no written revelation, and probably no writing of any kind. The only ceremonies by which men expressed and cherished their devotional sentiments were by sacrifice. An animal was slain after some religious forms, or some of the fruits of the earth were set apart. A portion of the sacrifice was burnt, and thus considered as having been offered to God. On the remainder the assembled company feasted, and those who partook were counted to have been participants in the act of worship. The office of offering the sacrifice was usually performed by the master of a family, the patriarch of a household, or the acknowledged head

of a tribe. Such was the case with Abraham and his posterity. When his offspring became a great people, and Moses was sent to organize them as a nation, he delegated the sacerdotal function to the tribe of Levi, and the high-priesthood to his brother Aaron and his eldest male descendants.

The high-priest was the ecclesiastical head of the nation, and nothing was omitted which could secure to him reverence and respect. His person was held especially sacred, and he was not permitted to sully his dignity by any badge of mourning, even under the suffering of the severest bereavement. He was clad in gorgeous vestments, and on his breast he wore the sacred Urim and Thummim, the mysterious oracle by which Jehovah was accustomed to make known his will.

One ceremony, in which he alone was permitted to officiate, conferred upon him peculiar sacredness. He alone was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, the inmost recess of the sanctuary, where were deposited the sacred Ark, the Book of the Law, and the Tables of the Covenant. This he did every year, on the day of expiation, when the whole people afflicted their souls. He took with him a part of the blood of the sacrifice, and sprinkled it on the lid of the Ark, as being the nearest representative of God, who was one of the parties concerned in the forgiveness of sinners.

In this ceremony every Jew took the profoundest interest, and the day of Atonement was the most solemn day of the year; for who was there of all the millions of the nation that was not conscious of sin, and felt not the need of pardon? That cere-

mony answered to one of the most universal wants of human nature, — the assurance that God is merciful and ready to pardon the contrite sinner. How could the Jew be persuaded to let go his hold on a religion which gave him so comfortable an assurance? There was something, too, fascinating and imposing in the whole temple service, — the vast assemblages which were collected three times a year, the beauty of the temple itself, the costliness of its ornaments, the constancy, the uniformity, the antiquity of the celebration of its rites, the awe of the Divine presence, which was thought to be vouchsafed to its inner sanctuary.

This service, at the time of the writing of this Epistle, was yet uninterrupted, still unabolished; nor was there any outward sign that it was soon coming to an end. This service, the converts to Christianity, to whom this Epistle was addressed, had forsaken. They had embraced a religion of far less outward show. Moses, the founder of Judaism, had been brought up in the court of Egypt, and though in his infancy he had been exposed in an ark of bulrushes, he had been the companion of kings and princes. Jesus, born in a manger, had been brought up in the humble village of Nazareth, and, till his showing to Israel, had moved in the humblest sphere. Moses, for forty years, had been the honored head of his nation, and when he died God had wisely hid his sepulchre from the superstitious reverence of his countrymen. Jesus, during his life, had been an humble, persecuted man, and had died upon a cross. The Law had been given from heaven, as the Jew believed, by the ministry of

angels. The Mosaic religion had been inaugurated on Sinai, amid thunder and smoke. Christianity had been established by the personal ministry of Christ, journeying like a pilgrim from village to village. No glory had surrounded his person, no court had sustained his dignity, and his only attendants, his disciples, were persons still humbler than himself. How could this vast disparity be counterbalanced, and the converted Jew be assured and made contented in his new faith?

The Jews, moreover, had a superstitious belief concerning the origin of their temple, which greatly increased its value in their estimation. By a fanciful interpretation of some passages in the Old Testament, they drew from it the doctrine that their temple was constructed after the model of heaven itself. This belief is dimly shadowed forth in the following passage: "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an high-priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, *a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high-priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law; *who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things*, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in

the mount." This pattern the Jews imagined to be nothing less than heaven itself.

Jesus had risen and ascended, he had gone to heaven, and of course had entered this august temple to be for ever there. The way was thus prepared for a parallelism between Judaism and Christianity, between the temple on earth and the temple in heaven.

The thesis of the whole Epistle to the Hebrews is to show that *Christianity is superior to Judaism*, even in those points on which Judaism most valued itself. It is so, first, *in the manner of its promulgation*. The Jews considered their law to have been given through the intervention of angels. To this opinion Stephen appeals in his speech to his countrymen: "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

Christ is superior to the angels, because he is called *God's son*, whereas the angels are only called *God's messengers*. Winds and lightnings are called God's messengers, which are not even persons, but only unintelligent, material things. He is superior in the *permanence* of his dignity and being. Jesus is the Messiah, and God has promised that his throne shall be stable and eternal, whereas the heavens, the very habitation of the angels, shall wax old as doth a garment, shall be folded together and pass away.

Jesus was superior to Moses, because, notwithstanding his admission to an intimate communication with God, he is only called *God's servant*. A servant has little rank or authority in a household. Indeed, he has no authority, and his highest attribute

is *fidelity*. Jesus, as the Messiah, is called *God's son*. A son has rank and authority in a household. That household is the Christian Church.

The next point to show, in order to prove the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, was that *Jesus was greater than the Levitical priesthood*, that he performed a function more august than that of the high-priest himself.

The proof of this latter proposition was surrounded with no inconsiderable difficulties. Jesus when on earth was not a priest in any possible sense whatever. He never performed any priestly office. He was not of the sacerdotal lineage. He was of the tribe of Judah. No man could be priest, according to the Mosaic institute, who was not of the tribe of Levi. Besides, the real priesthood were then in office, and daily celebrating the prescribed ritual in the temple at Jerusalem. How then could Jesus be a priest? He proves this out of the Jews' own interpretation of the Old Testament. It would seem, from Christ's conversation with the Jews, recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, that they were accustomed to interpret the one hundred and tenth Psalm of their expected Messiah. In that Psalm there occurs this passage: "*Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.*" If he was a high-priest *for ever*, he had a perpetual priesthood.

The materials then for the writer's argument were all prepared to his hand, in the previous opinions of the Jews, for whose especial edification the whole Epistle to the Hebrews was composed. Christ was a priest, the hundred and tenth Psalm said so. He had risen, and ascended, and gone into heaven.

Heaven, in the Jewish conception, was a vast temple, the original pattern of the temple at Jerusalem. He had entered into a state of immortality, and if a priest at all, he must have a perpetual priesthood, he must be a priest for ever.

To show that Jesus was of the order of Melchisedek, besides the declaration of the hundred and tenth Psalm, various circumstances of resemblance are thrown in. They lived far apart, but were in some respects alike. Melchisedek had no recorded predecessor, and no immediate successor in office. No mention is made in the Scripture of his father, or mother, or of his children. It is not said when he was born, or when he died, or whether he was born or died at all. By a figure of speech, then, he may be said *not* to have been born or to have died at all, and to have a species of perpetuity, and thus to have resembled Jesus in his real immortality.

But what direct argument was there to show that the order of priesthood of Melchisedek was *superior* to that of Aaron? Abraham, the honored patriarch of the Jews, *paid tithes to him*, thereby acknowledging his superior dignity and sanctity. Besides, Levi, the father of the sacerdotal tribe, was a descendant of Abraham, and therefore might be said to be in him at the time, and thus, through Abraham, to have paid tithes to Melchisedek.

The priesthood of Jesus was superior to the Levitical priesthood, because it was an *eternal* priesthood. The incumbents of the Levitical priesthood were mortal men. Each one lived but a short time, and then was succeeded by another. Jesus has passed into a state of immortality, and therefore has *a per-*

petual priesthood. The Jewish high-priest offered the great sacrifice of atonement once every year, and that sacrifice was continually repeated. Jesus offered his sacrifice but once, and it never needed to be, and never was, repeated. "But Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by his immortal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The practical conclusion drawn from all this is: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

It is scarcely necessary to say, that all this comparison of Judaism with Christianity, considered as logical reasoning, has no validity. Nothing whatever is proved by it. Considered as an allegory, or a series of comparisons, it is a splendid composition. As a rhetorical address, it is affecting and persuasive,

most admirably adapted to give the converted Jew a high appreciation of his new faith, and to make him contented as the follower of Jesus, although he had forsaken the more splendid ritual of Moses; for he was informed that *the spiritual significance* of the work of Christ tended to loftier and more permanent issues, as being more effectual and universal.

As a logical argument, the conclusiveness of the whole Epistle must depend on the soundness of the premises which are laid down as the foundation. It does not appear by the record of the Old Testament that there was any intimation of the intervention of angels in giving the Law. The ten commandments are introduced with the following preface: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The later Jews, as their theological ideas became more refined, shrunk from so material a representation of God, and maintained that the giving of the Law was through the medium of angels. That such an opinion prevailed, we have the evidence of Stephen, of Paul, and of Josephus, as well as the writings of the Jewish Rabbins. So strong was this impression in the Apostolic age, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in establishing the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, thought it necessary to frame an argument to prove the superiority of Jesus the Messiah to the angels. But the very opinion which that argument was intended to meet has no legitimate historical foundation.

The second argument to show the superiority of

Christianity to Judaism, by proving the superiority of Jesus to Moses, is exceedingly ingenious; but, logically considered, must be confessed to have but little force. It turns upon the distinction between *son* and *servant*, and between being *in* and *over* a household. No difference of *nature* is asserted or intended in the argument. Both were what they were, not by *nature*, but by divine *appointment*. "Wherefore, brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him that *appointed* him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." "And Moses, verily, was faithful in all his house, as *a servant*, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ, as *a son* over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." A son *over* a household has a higher dignity than a servant *in* a household, though of the same nature. But God calls Moses his *servant;* Jesus he calls his *son*. Moses did not found Judaism, he only reformed and remodelled it from the patriarchal religion. Jesus founded Christianity, and the Christian Church proceeds from him personally as its head. "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more glory than the house." *House* and *household* are expressed by the same word in Greek. This argument turns, you perceive, upon the double sense of a single word, house, a building, and house, a family, and therefore is merely verbal and rhetorical.

We now come to the examination of the third

argument, which is the main subject of this Discourse; that by which Jesus as a priest is proved to be *superior* to the Levitical priesthood. Christ, as we have already seen, was not a priest while here on earth, in the literal sense of the term. This is admitted in so many words: "For if he were on earth, *he should not be a priest*, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." "For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda, *of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood.*" His priesthood began when he was removed from earth and entered the heavenly world. His priestly office was exercised only in the temple of heaven itself. He entered that temple only when he died, for he entered it *with his own blood.* But no part of his blood could by any possibility be transported to heaven, and really enter this spiritual and immaterial temple.

The question whether the priesthood of Christ is real and literal, or only analogical and rhetorical, turns mainly upon the facts, whether there was any original reference to Christ in that clause of the hundred and tenth Psalm, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek," and whether there is in reality any such temple in the heavenly world as the Jews imagined to have been the prototype of their temple in Jerusalem.

It is nowhere asserted in the Bible, that the hundred and tenth Psalm related primarily to the Messiah. Christ does not assert it in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew. He merely reasons with the

Jews upon their own premises, and asks them, if they make that Psalm prophetic of the Messiah, how they will explain a certain part of it.

Now there is no reason in the Psalm itself for applying it to "the Prince of Peace," but many strong reasons against it. The last three verses are wholly inapplicable to the true Messiah.

"The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath; he shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries; he shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall be lift up the head."

There is no straining, either by figurative or spiritual interpretation, by which such language as this can be made to apply to any part of the history of the person or the religion of Christ. It must primarily have referred to some other person, probably some warrior king of the olden time. The most rational interpretation is, that the whole Psalm was composed in honor of David, after taking the fortress and site of Jerusalem from the Jebusites.

With regard to the second fact, the existence of a real temple in the heavens, which is assumed as the basis of the priesthood of Christ, it is sufficient to say, that it has no foundation in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, nor in the physical or spiritual universe, as we are made acquainted with them from other sources. It is simply a Jewish or Rabbinical fancy, which originated a long time after the closing of the Old Testament, probably from the superstitious reverence which gradually grew up about that edifice, which the Jew regarded as the most

sacred of anything on this globe. Having been constructed by divine direction, he imagined that it could have no other original than heaven itself. Hence there was a peculiar significance in the language of Moses, when he relates that he was ordered "to make all things *according to the pattern shown him in the mount.*" The literal acceptance of this idea would involve nothing less than the materiality of heaven, and of God himself.

It is hardly possible, therefore, to believe that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews himself intended his composition as a logical argument. It seems more probable, to me at least, that it was written as a sort of allegorical exhortation, in which, by an ingenious parallelism between Judaism and Christianity, he might more effectually commend the great spiritual truths of the Gospel to his countrymen by clothing them in the costume of Judaic idealism.

What are those truths? They are these. The Jewish Messiah, to whom the prophets had pointed, and for whom all former ages and dispensations had prepared the way, has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is the most exalted personage next to God that we know, and he has founded a religion which is destined to be universal, and to last as long as time itself. Jesus and his religion meet the religious wants of man better than Judaism itself, even in those points where Judaism was strongest and most satisfactory. The ancient sacrifices were intended to assure men of God's readiness to pardon the sins of the penitent. Christ has done more. By his death, he sealed the new covenant with his

blood, which covenant contains the promise of forgiveness to the penitent. Not only so, not only has he assured us of forgiveness, but of immortality. *He has tasted death for every man;* he has overcome death, and triumphantly entered heaven itself, as our forerunner, and thus become the certain pledge to us of a better life.

These are the simple and glorious truths which constitute the very essence and substance of Christianity under any and every mode of exhibition. They were made to assume this outward dress, to commend them to the affections and acceptance of the Jews.

The *literal priesthood of Christ*, then, is *not* to be placed *among the doctrines of Christianity*, but is to be put in the category of *the phraseology of the New Testament.* It is not found in the Gospels, the fundamental records, but only in the Epistle to the Hebrews, written to a peculiar people for a special purpose. It was instructive, persuasive, and edifying to those who had been educated under the ritual of Judaism, and to us is it so as far as we have been made to sympathize with the Jews by a constant reading of the Old Testament from our earliest years.

Priesthood, in the literal sense, is not a Christian idea; neither is sacrifice. They belonged to Judaism, which Christianity was intended to supersede. Christ performed no such office. The business of his mission was *teaching*, and his commission to his disciples was, "Go, teach all nations."

But sacrifice and priesthood did correspond to a want in human nature, which is perennial and uni-

versal, the sense of guilt and need of pardon. The death of Christ, connected with his resurrection and ascension, since he came as the ambassador of God's mercy, answered the same purpose in the New Dispensation. The death of Christ then, by figure of speech, might be called *a perpetual sacrifice.*

Another office of priesthood is *intercession*, and Christ, being raised to immortality, is our perpetual Intercessor. The crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ are the main facts in the Christian history. They are the keystones of Christian faith. Take them out of the arch, and the whole structure tumbles to ruins.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives them their due pre-eminence. And although, in writing to the ancient people of God, he gives them a Jewish costume, we see that they were to his mind, as they are to ours, the anchor of hope, which entereth within the veil, and brings us near to the glorious realities of the eternal world.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

SACRIFICIAL LANGUAGE.

AND HE TOOK THE CUP, AND GAVE THANKS, AND GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING, DRINK YE ALL OF IT: FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT, WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. — Matthew xxvi. 27, 28.

THE subject of this Discourse is *the sacrificial language of the New Testament*, when applied to the death of Christ. It is, as is acknowledged on all hands, of very frequent occurrence. The question concerning it is, Is it literal or is it figurative? Do the sacred writers mean to assert, that Christ's death was *literally* a propitiatory sacrifice, offered to God to atone for the sins of mankind, or do they mean to say that it is *analogous* to a sacrifice, or may be *compared* to the various sacrifices which constituted so large a part of the ceremonial of the Mosaic religion?

In my judgment, the latter representation is the true one, — that the death of Christ was *analogous* to a sacrifice; and therefore I place the sacrificial language of the writers of the New Testament in the category of *phraseology*. If it were otherwise, I

should have placed the atonement among the *doctrines* of Christianity.

The common and popular doctrine upon this subject has been, that Christ's death was a real propitiatory sacrifice. Not only so, it was the only true and efficacious sacrifice that has ever been offered. All other sacrifices, ordained under the old dispensation, were only types and foreshadowings of this. They had no efficacy in themselves, but only as they pointed the faith of the offerer forward to the only real atonement, in the blood of Christ.

In corroboration of this apprehension, various passages of the New Testament are appealed to, but especially the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Behold the Lamb of God," says John the Baptist, "that taketh away the sin of the world." Paul says: "Christ hath loved us and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." In another place: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Peter says: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." In another place: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." John declares: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

In the institution of the supper, Christ himself said of the vine, "Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins.*"

On the strength of these and similar passages, it is affirmed that the death of Christ was *a real sacrifice to God,* the means of procuring God's forgiveness, the indispensable condition of God's pardon of any sin of any individual of the human race. No matter how penitent any individual might have been, however thoroughly he might have reformed, or how holy he might have become, God could not have forgiven him, and he must have been consigned to everlasting burnings.

Such was the strictness of God's law; and so necessary was it to maintain its honor, that its authority would have been annulled, its force would have been broken, had not the punishment it threatens, and the penalty it exacts, been suffered by Christ.

Not only so, it has been maintained that the guilt of the sinner is taken from him and transferred to Christ, and thus is expiated and blotted out, and the righteousness of Christ is transferred to the sinner, so that he becomes righteous as Christ was, and as deserving of everlasting happiness.

To these views of the death of Christ the most weighty and insurmountable objections may be urged.

And, first, the death of Christ was *not* a literal sacrifice; it wanted the *conditions* and *circumstances* of a sacrifice. A sin-offering, and it is in this sense that Christ's death is said to be a sacri-

fice, *was an offering brought by a penitent person in token of his contrition.* If a victim, it was slain by a priest, a consecrated official person, set apart for this especial function. Some part of it at least was placed upon an altar and burnt. Who brought about the death of Christ? Were they penitent persons? The Apostles, immediately after the resurrection of Jesus, accuse the Jews of his death as a *murder.* "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain." If there were any offerers of Christ as a sin-offering, it must have been these Jews. And yet, on their part, so far from being an offering of penitence was it, that the Apostles characterize it as a *guilty murder.* No thought of a penitential offering ever entered into their minds.

If there were any priests in this sacrifice, they must have been the *soldiers* who crucified him. But they were Romans, and we have no evidence that they ever knew or recognized the true God. As far as they were concerned, Christ was on a level with the two thieves who were crucified at his side. To them the act was a matter of official duty, and we have no reason to suppose that any thought of offering any species of a sacrifice ever entered their minds.

The victim, according to the Mosaic ritual, was laid, in part, upon an altar. There was no altar in

this case, but Christ expired upon a cross. The manner of his death was determined by the circumstance that Judæa was then in the possession of the Romans, whose manner of execution for the lowest criminals was by *crucifixion*. The common mode of putting criminals to death in Judæa, according to the Mosaic institute, was *stoning*.

We next inquire, *Did Christ sacrifice himself in a literal sense?* If he did, then he died for the sake of dying; he voluntarily put an end to his life, when he might have avoided it. Or, to speak in plain but repulsive language, he *destroyed himself*. And can we suppose a holy God to have been pleased with such an act, in itself considered? In this consideration, we must abstract this act from everything else, and isolate it from every other part of his mission and ministry.

Human sacrifices were among the worst abominations of the heathen religions, and one of the severest reproaches which were ever cast upon the heathen deities was the supposition that they could be pleased with such offerings.

But Christ did *not* die for the sake of dying, nor did he take his own life. He died to sustain his claim to be the promised Messiah. He was tried by the public authorities of his country as an *impostor*. He was solemnly interrogated by the chief priest: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said"; or, as another Evangelist reports, "I am." The consequence of that avowal was an immediate condemnation to death.

If we may credit the plain historic statement of

facts, the purpose of his death was not to appease God's wrath, or to be a sacrifice for sin, but to bear testimony to a truth, which was vital to the world's salvation, that he was the true Messiah, and his Gospel an authentic revelation from God. *He sacrificed his life to the success of his mission.*

We say, then, from these considerations, that the death of Christ was *not* a literal sacrifice. It had not a *single circumstance* of a literal sacrifice, — *no penitent offerer, no priest, no altar;* nor did Christ offer himself in any other literal sense than by dying as a martyr to the truth.

There is another consideration, which ought to go far in determining our judgment in this matter. When we consider the sacrifices of the old dispensation, we find, on a more careful examination, *that they were not all of one kind.* There were many species, all differing from each other in their nature, their purpose, and their import. Sacrifices, among all nations, made a part of divine worship, from the earliest ages. Before the invention of books, and the institution of public religious instruction, sacrifices were almost the only purpose of a religious nature for which men came together.

One species of sacrifice was the *eucharistical*, as it is called, whose simple and exclusive use was *the expression of gratitude to God*, as the Giver of all good. It had nothing to do with sin, or penitence, or God's forgiveness. Such were the first sacrifices of which we read in the Bible, the offerings brought by Cain and Abel of the first-fruits of the earth and the offspring of the flocks. Such were the offerings directed by Moses to be made at the in-

coming of the harvest. The institution of this sacrifice is mentioned in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. And ye shall offer that day, when ye wave the sheaf, an he-lamb without blemish of the first year, for a burnt-offering unto the Lord."

The whole purpose of this was the expression of *religious gratitude* to God as the Giver of the harvest, and thus to make the common blessings of life to be the means of spiritual improvement. No ideas of penitence or forgiveness entered into this sacrifice. The only and exclusive sentiment which it was intended to express was gratitude. Penitence and forgiveness were signified by another and distinct sacrifice, called *the sin-offering*. That it was distinct is shown by the fact that a sin-offering was made during this very festival, and called a sin-offering. "Then shall ye sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin-offering."

Then there was *the sacrifice of commemoration*, with which sin and its forgiveness had nothing to do. Such was the sacrifice of the Passover. It was simply a domestic supper with religious rites, to remind the Israelites of their deliverance from Egypt. In its institution, there is nothing said of sin or its forgiveness, nor that the lamb, which was killed on this occasion, had anything to do with human guilt.

It was killed for no purpose of expiation, but to furnish the supper, which commemorated the last meal which the Israelites took in haste at their departure from the house of bondage. It commemorated no man's deliverance from sin, but only Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

There is another species of sacrifice, which comes still nearer our subject, *the sacrifice of ratification.* It was customary among ancient nations, Hebrews as well as others, to solemnize the ratification of treaties and compacts by the ceremony of sacrifice, in which both parties united, and by which they recognized that they were bound to the performance of their stipulations, not only by an honorable, but by a *religious* obligation.

In conformity to this custom, God was pleased to confirm to Abraham the promise of giving to his posterity the land of Canaan, by a sacrifice of ratification. The ceremony is detailed in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. "And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." The promise is then repeated, with minuter circumstances. "And it came to pass, that,

when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In that same day the Lord made a *covenant* with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

A sacrifice of ratification is described by Homer to have been celebrated by Priam and his sons on the one part, and the Greek generals on the other, at the siege of Troy, which is among the most ancient events related in Grecian history. The subject of covenant was, that the Greeks and Trojans agreed to decide their contest by a single combat between Paris and Menelaus. Three lambs are brought before the assembled hosts.

> "Two lambs devoted by your country's rite,
> To earth a sable, to the sun a white,
> Prepare, ye Trojans. Then a third we bring,
> Select to Jove the inviolable king.
> On either side, a sacred herald stands:
> The wine they mix, and on each monarch's hands
> Pour the full urn, then draws the Grecian lord,
> His cutlass sheathed beneath, his ponderous sword,
> From the signed victims crops the curling hair,
> The heralds part it, and the princes share."

One of the heralds then utters a solemn prayer, and administers the oath of fidelity to the covenant. The victims are then slain.

> "With that the chief the tender victims slew,
> And in the dust their bleeding bodies threw.
> The vital spirit issued at the wound,
> And left the members quivering on the ground.
> From the same urn *they drink the mingled wine*,
> And add libations to the powers divine,

> While thus their prayers united mount the sky :
> Hear, mighty Jove, and hear, ye gods, on high!
> And may their blood who first the league confound,
> Shed like this wine, distain the thirsty ground."

Such, then, was the sacrifice of ratification among the heathen, contemporary with the existence of the Hebrew commonwealth.

Another instance, still nearer to our purpose, is the ceremony by which the Mosaic institute was recognized and established between God and the nation of Israel. "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. Now Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, *Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.*"

The sacrifice of these oxen had nothing to do with the pardon of sin, or with sin at all. It was simply a sacrifice of ratification. The blood sprinkled on the people had no reference to the forgiveness of transgression, but only signified that the people on whom it was sprinkled were parties to the covenant.

There was another species of sacrifice, — *the sin-*

offering. Every religion, in order to meet all the religious wants of mankind, must make provision for the pardon of sin; for every man feels himself a sinner, and that he needs forgiveness. I do not mean that every religion must provide the means of appeasing God or making him merciful, but of symbolizing God's clemency and assuring it to man, and of expressing man's penitence and contrition, without which no sin can be forgiven.

There was such a provision in the law of Moses. A man on becoming sensible of some offence which he had committed, in token of his penitence, was directed to bring a sacrifice to the priest. The useless parts of it were burnt, and the remainder went to the support of the priesthood.

There was, moreover, one day of the year appointed to commemorate the sinfulness and express the penitence of the whole nation. The priest made a sacrifice, and carried some of the blood of the sacrifice into the holy of holies, and sprinkled some of it upon the lid of the ark, which was the nearest representative of God in the transaction, in which God, the Lawgiver, was to forgive man, the transgressor. But then we have every reason to believe that there was *no* efficacy in the sacrifice itself. It was only *symbolic*, and the thing signified by the symbol was *the penitence of the people*. For, says Moses, "This shall be a statute for ever unto you, that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, *ye shall afflict your souls*, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you. For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to

cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and *ye shall afflict your souls*, by a statute for ever."

That is to say, "One day of the year shall be given wholly to the duty of meditating on your sins, and humbling yourselves in deep contrition before God." And simultaneously with this universal penitence, humiliation, and contrition, an appropriate *sacrifice* shall be offered by the high-priest at Jerusalem, to aid and symbolize this national and universal penitence. But no man in his senses can suppose that there was any efficacy in that sacrifice to take away sin, apart from the repentance which it symbolized and commemorated. If no heart had been penitent, no sin could have been forgiven. And it is equally absurd to suppose that, if all hearts had been penitent, all sins would not have been forgiven, whether any sacrifice had been offered or not.

There was another species of sacrifice still, *the sacrifice of simple worship*, a simple offering to God as an act of homage and worship. This had no respect to sin or offence of any kind. It might be offered even by a stranger, and was merely an acknowledgment of Jehovah as the true God. It was intended to propitiate God's favor, instead of obtaining the forgiveness of sins. Such was the morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb, made daily at the temple at Jerusalem. That hour was selected by the Jews, not only at Jerusalem and in Judæa, but throughout the world, as the hour of prayer. And doubtless their devotions were aided and kindled by the consciousness that, while they

were praying, the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice at Jerusalem was ascending towards heaven.

Such were the various kinds of sacrifice which existed among the Jews, and so totally different were they from each other in their nature and purpose. Now if the death of Christ had been a *real* and *literal sacrifice*, it must have been some *one* of these, and *but* one; it could not have been all at once. We have already enumerated *five distinct species; the eucharistic or thank-offering, the sacrifice of commemoration, the sacrifice of ratification, the sin-offering, and the sacrifice of worship.*

Had the death of Christ been *literally any one of these*, the language of that sacrifice would have been used concerning it exclusively. But the language of *all* is applied to it alternately, which shows that it was literally *neither*, and *that in all cases it is figurative and analogical*, and not literal and primary. His death was *not* a literal sacrifice in any sense, but bore some *resemblance* or *analogy* to them all, and therefore the relations of his death are *illustrated* by them all.

He is spoken of as *a common sacrifice of worship.* Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, says: "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." No rational being supposes that the death of Christ, an atrocious and cruel murder as it was, was in itself pleasing to God. What then *does* he mean to say? He means to compare the *advantages* we receive through Christ with the advantages which the Jew derived from his sacrifices,

when sincerely offered. They brought him near to God, by spiritual renovation and reconciliation. And that is precisely the benefit we derive from the whole mission of Christ, *his life* and *teaching*, as well as his sufferings and death.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the same Apostle says: "Even Christ, *our Passover*, is sacrificed for us." *The Passover was not a sin-offering in any sense.* It had no reference to sin. It was merely *a sacrifice of commemoration.* It was instituted to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. So the death of Christ is our deliverance, just so far as it delivers us from sin. And it delivers us from sin only so far as it is instrumental in bringing us to repentance and reformation. It is efficacious, not in making God merciful, but us penitent.

The death of Christ is called a sin-offering, but the careful reader of the New Testament will be astonished to find in how few instances. He is often spoken of as dying for *our benefit*, but very seldom as dying for our sins. He says of himself: "I lay down my life *for the sheep*." He dies for their benefit and defence. And the figure is taken, not from sacrifice, but from the office of a shepherd, who sometimes sacrifices his life in defence of his flock from the incursions of wild beasts.

In a very few passages, Christ's death is called a sacrifice for sin. John says of him: "Who is a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Paul says: "How that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." In another place: "Who gave himself for

our sins." Peter thus speaks of his death: "Who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

Here is evidently a reference to a symbolical transaction under the Law. One of the victims on the day of atonement *was not slain at all*, but by a symbolical ceremony was made *to bear away*, or *take upon itself*, the sins of the people. "But the goat upon which the lot fell to be *the scape-goat* shall be presented alive before the Lord, *to make an atonement with him*, and to let him go for a scape-goat into the wilderness..... And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, *putting them upon the head of the goat*, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And *the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities* unto a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."

Now no man with common understanding can imagine that this was any other than a *ritual, figurative*, and *symbolic* transaction. No man believes that a goat *actually* bore the sins of a man, was conscious of their guilt, or suffered their punishment. And yet the record says, that *the priest actually put the iniquities of the people on the head of the goat*, and that he bore them away into the wilderness.

So where Peter speaks of Christ's bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, we are no more compelled to take the language *literally* than in the other case; for the language is equally strong and positive in both. It is only necessary for us to rec-

ognize in it the assertion, that the death of Christ is made instrumental in bringing about our penitence and forgiveness.

When, in the institution of the Supper, our Saviour spoke of his death as a sacrifice, the predominant idea is that of *a sacrifice of ratification.* Taking the cup he said, "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." As if he had said: "As when Moses proposed the Law to the people, and they promised to obey it, he sprinkled the blood of the victim upon them in token of ratification, so is the new covenant about to be ratified by my blood, of which the wine is the symbol."

In that covenant there is a stipulation for the forgiveness of the sins of the penitent. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; . . . . . but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord, *for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*"

He assumed authority on earth to forgive sins. The *proof* of that authority was his resurrection, to

which his crucifixion led the way. And says Paul: "*If Christ be not risen, ye are yet in your sins.*" So that the death of Christ did not procure nor assure the forgiveness of sins. It was his *resurrection* which demonstrated his mission, and guaranteed his promise of forgiveness to the penitent. Had the instrumentality of his death in procuring the forgiveness of sin been simply *expiation*, then it would have been equally efficacious whether he had risen from the dead or not.

The fact, then, that the death of Christ is compared to *all* the different kinds of sacrifice, is evidence, is a proof, that it was *literally none of them*, and not a literal sacrifice at all, but is compared to them all from some point of resemblance to each.

Nothing then could be more contrary to fact, than to say that the death of Christ was the real sacrifice, and all the sacrifices of the Old Testament merely types and shadows, prefiguring it and looking forward to it. On the contrary, the *only* reason why the death of Christ was called a sacrifice at all, was the fact *that the Christian religion was first promulgated among the Jews, who were a sacrificial people*, and full of the ideas and the language of sacrifice. It was perfectly natural that Christ and his Apostles, in establishing a purely spiritual religion, in which there were *no* sacrifices, and by which sacrifices were done away, should use language in illustration borrowed from the old ritual and its sacred associations.

But to represent the sacrifices as the *figures*, and the death of Christ as the *reality*, is a *complete in-*

version of facts; as much as to dig up a tree by the roots, and plant the branches in the earth, and rear the roots in the air, would be an inversion of the order of nature.

Christ's great work was to establish his truth in the earth, not to expiate men's sins. "The flesh," says he, "profiteth nothing. The *words* that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." This is made most evident when we come to his last prayer with his disciples. When he was about to leave the earth, he lifted up his soul in prayer for the success of his mission. On that solemn occasion, he would naturally lay stress upon that part of it which was really most important. If his *expiatory death* had been the main purpose of his mission, he would have addressed God in such language as this: "I am now approaching the most important part of my office. I am about to offer myself in sacrifice. Receive, O Father, this propitiation for the sins of mankind. Let it appease thy displeasure, and satisfy thy justice."

But he says nothing of this. He makes the great purpose of his mission to be something of a very different nature. "*I have finished the work,*" says he, "which thou gavest me to do. *I have given them the words which thou gavest me.*" *This* was his *great* work, and it was finished; and *his death was merely incidental,* his testimony to the truth of what he had taught. "And now come I to thee."

He prayed for their sanctification. But by what means? That their sins might be expiated by his death, that their transgressions might be imputed to him, and his righteousness imputed to them? No.

But by means most natural and rational. "Sanctify them *through thy truth:* thy word is truth."

Here, then, according to Christ's last solemn prayer, are the whole force and power and moral efficacy of the Gospel, centred *in its truth*, what it teaches mankind, what it makes men receive as truth and act upon as such. This is the *only* salvation for man. And the death of Christ has the most immediate bearing upon it. He declared that the truths he taught came immediately from God, and were decisive of men's future destiny. He was accused as an impostor, pretending to a revelation which he had never received. Had he refused to die a martyr to the truth, there would have been an end to his religion; it would have had no power, and the millions who have been redeemed by it from sin and moral death would have been left to perish.

His crucifixion, instead of crushing his cause, was indirectly the means of arming his Apostles with new power. It made his death a tragedy, the deepest, most solemn, and most moving, that was ever enacted upon earth. Kings, governors, and senates were the actors in it, — a whole city was its theatre, and a whole nation its spectators. The most careless eye has seen in it the triumph of malice and falsehood over truth and innocence, and the injustice of that trial, the indignity of those stripes, and the agonies of that unmerited death upon the cross, have fulfilled his own prophecy: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." They have fixed upon him the spmpathies of all mankind to the end of time. Men have hearts as well as understandings, sensibility as

well as intellect, and thus Christ addressed all the principles of human nature at once, and made conquest of them all. The inauguration of Christianity as the religion of the world was taken out of the obscure localities of Nazareth, Capernaum, and the shores of the Galilean lake, and transferred to the capital of Judæa, there to be publicly performed by unwitting actors, and witnessed by multitudes who knew not the use which God was making of their obstinacy, prejudices, and blindness. That death in the sight of thousands, officially procured and officially ascertained, that rocky sepulchre, watched over by a guard of armed soldiers, only increased the wonder of the awe-struck world, when the sepulchre was opened and the Crucified re-appeared. That event clothed its witnesses with new power, and conferred upon them an authority which men had never possessed before. To the treasures of spiritual truth which they had derived from the teaching of Christ, they now added a message from the spiritual world; they became the ambassadors of a *risen* Saviour. The power of moral conviction, which their discourses ever carried with them, was henceforth deepened and confirmed by the powers of the world to come.

The Gospel, thus corroborated from earth beneath and from heaven above, went on conquering and to conquer. It took a deeper hold on humanity than anything had ever done before; it was found to possess the power of spiritual renovation; it created men anew in the moral image of Christ; the evil passions of men were curbed and subdued, and reason and conscience were enthroned in their stead. A com-

munity rose up, such as the world had never seen, such as no laws, no philosophy, no education could ever produce, and Paul the Apostle, the despised son of a persecuted race, by a few months' labor in the various cities of the Roman empire, through the spiritual power of the Gospel, accomplished a renovation of society which sages and lawgivers had for ages attempted in vain.

The blood of Christ, then, is the seal of the truth of his religion. By that religion, its teachings and moral influences, mankind are saved. And it is a true representation, though not in the common, material sense, where the Apocalyptist makes the multitude of the saints in light to celebrate his praise. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

DISCOURSE XXV.

REGENERATION.

MARVEL NOT THAT I SAID UNTO THEE, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN. THE WIND BLOWETH WHERE IT LISTETH, AND THOU HEAREST THE SOUND THEREOF, BUT CANST NOT TELL WHENCE IT COMETH, AND WHITHER IT GOETH: SO IS EVERY ONE THAT IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT.—John iii. 7, 8.

THE importance of making a distinction between Doctrine and Phraseology is nowhere, perhaps, more conspicuous than in the language which is used in the New Testament concerning *spiritual renovation*, that change which Christianity is designed to bring about in the soul of man. Make it *a figure of speech*, as it was in the mouth of Christ, *a phraseology* in common use among the Jews and well understood by them, and it is reasonable and consistent; and it harmonizes with experience, justice, the nature of man, and the Divine character. But make it *a doctrine*, the very sum and essence of Christianity, and it arrays itself against reason, justice, and morality, and makes Christianity itself the revelation of unspeakable wrong.

Its original meaning is sufficiently explained

when we consider the manner in which it was introduced by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus. It is not brought forward as anything new, but as a thing with which Nicodemus, as a Rabbi, ought to be well acquainted. "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Nicodemus, as a Jewish Rabbi, well knew that the incorporation of a convert from Paganism into the Jewish nation was called *a new birth*, not because there was any change of personal identity, not because there was any change of nature or constitution, but because there was a change of religion, a change of faith, of habits, of association,—there was, in fact, the commencement of a new life. If the conversion were sincere, there was a change of *character*. Outwardly, the convert became by adoption a child of Abraham, and an heir of the promises made to him. Inwardly he became the spiritual child of Abraham, by faith in God and obedience to his laws. It was a saying among the Jews, "If any one become a proselyte, he is like a child new born." And again, "The Gentile that is made a proselyte, and the servant that is made free, behold, he is like a child new born."

Christ asserts, greatly to the surprise of Nicodemus, that just such a change is necessary in order that a Jew may become a Christian. The heathen proselyte became a Jew by circumcision. The Jew must become a Christian by baptism, and thus incorporate himself with the new Church which is now being established under the Messiah.

But this was not all. All Jews were not the spiritual children of Abraham. Those only were such who resembled him in character. As Paul after-

wards beautifully expressed the same truth, "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Christianity has to do with the soul, with the spiritual part of man. It has to do with *character* as well as profession. The soul of man is free, and is not controlled by the outward lineage of the body, nor yet by forms and ceremonies. Baptism itself is no certain guaranty of the Christian character. It still leaves the soul free to choose its own actions and form its own character. The soul is free as the wind that blows. Allegiance to the Gospel must be *spontaneous*, and the process of spiritual renovation must be wrought out in the secret recesses of the mind. Can any thing be more true, rational, and practical than this?

Interpreted as phraseology, it stands on the same ground with other figures of speech used in the New Testament. A state of sin is called *death*, and a recovery to virtue *a resurrection*, or a passing from death unto life. A state of moral degradation is called *blindness*, and redemption from it is called *restoration to sight*. Jesus carried the figure of spiritual death so far, as to call his Gospel *his voice*, by which he summons those who lie in the graves of moral debasement to spiritual life. Such figures mislead no one, while they are interpreted as figures. They add vivacity and force to the teachings of the Saviour, and generally to the language of the New Testament.

So long as the principle is kept in view, that

comparisons and similitudes are to be expected to hold in *a few particulars only*, and that the thing illustrated remains unchanged, and retains its own nature and laws, and is to be judged of by that nature and those laws, and not by the qualities or circumstances of the thing to which it is compared, there is no serious misapprehension.

But all minds are not satisfied with this. Prompted by various motives, they proceed to transform *phraseology* into *doctrine*, to petrify a figure into a dogma, and Regeneration becomes the very sum and essence of Christianity. Instead of considering spiritual renovation as *illustrated* by natural truth, the laws and conditions of natural birth are transferred to spiritual renovation. Whole treatises are written to carry out this idea, not to make Christianity reasonable, plain, and practical, but to involve it in a cloud of mysticism.

The fruit of this transformation of phraseology into doctrine is first the implication, and then the outright assertion, that regeneration is a change of *nature* instead of a change of *character*. What follows from this? Inferences most dishonorable to God, and most discouraging and disheartening to men,—doctrines which seriously derange and embarrass the whole administration of Christianity.

The clearest and most indisputable dictate of natural justice is, that law should be adapted to the subject, that requirements should be commensurate with endowments and capacities. To require impossibilities is the very essence of a tyranny. If God makes man, I mean each man, now and here, with a nature incapable of complying with his

requirements, incapable of religion, and it is necessary that his nature should be changed by the same power that created it before he can do anything acceptable to God; then is the government of God wholly indefensible, and it is impossible to regard his character as worthy of our homage and affection, and there is at once an end of religion.

Burdened with regeneration as a doctrine concerning the nature of man, the preaching of the Gospel becomes anything rather than the annunciation of glad tidings to mankind. The teacher of Christianity, when he delivers his message, is compelled to say to men that their sinfulness is owing to *defect of nature*, and not to perversity of will; that they are created *without the capacity of religion*, and that capacity they cannot acquire, and yet are they subject to the direst penalties for the want of its possession.

But such is the direct contradiction between these two statements, that it is impossible for mankind to believe but one. And they will probably accept that which will involve the least responsibility and require the least exertion; and that will be to take the preacher at his word, when he tells them of their inability to do anything for themselves.

But what words can express the moral desolation which must be produced by that doctrine which takes from the great mass of mankind the sense of spiritual capacity and responsibility; which teaches that *by nature* they are not within the conditions of probation, and that they cannot be placed within those conditions except by an act of almighty power?

Sometimes this doctrine is carried so far that the unregenerate, as they are called, are treated as if they were incapable of any religious act or exercise. In the house of God they are spoken of as mere spectators, as incapable of taking a part in the devotions, and as being there not to pray, but that the regenerate may pray for them. It is even maintained that the prayers of the unregenerate are sin.

What position could possibly be taken more injurious to the religious welfare of much the larger majority of mankind, than to teach them *that they are not religious beings*, and, until their natures are changed, can have no part nor lot in religion? What presumption, even were this distinction founded in fact, for a part of mankind to assume that they are regenerated, and the rest are not! The good deeds of all on one side of a certain line are to be denied as worthless, and of no account in the sight of God; and the evil deeds of all those on the other side, to be regarded as venial, and not endangering their salvation.

This representation of mankind as separated into two grand divisions by the line of regeneration is essentially false. It does not correspond to facts, either historically or theoretically. The religious life is historically progressive. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Those instances are exceptions in which a sudden and great change takes place in the character. Christ has well compared the progress of the religious life to the growth of grain out of the earth. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and

should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."

The history of every human life is made up of little things, none of which exerts a very powerful influence on the character, but all together, and in the aggregate, they make us what we are when we leave this world. Great events do not often happen, and it would be unsafe in spiritual matters to wait for their occurrence.

The spiritual renovation which is figuratively called Regeneration in the New Testament, is *a voluntary change of character.* When preached as a dogma, it becomes *a passive change of constitution,* and thus virtually takes the spiritual destiny of man out of his hands. In this shape it usually connects itself with the doctrine of Original Sin, which is in itself the most atrocious imputation on God and man. It supposes that God suffered the first parents of our race to decide by their own act the eternal destiny of all their posterity, and incapacitate them for virtue and holiness. In this condition of things, their posterity have no probation. They are lost before they have done a single act of their own. They have no moral freedom, and yet are made liable to all the penalties of transgression just as much as if they were.

The selection of any part of them becomes a matter of mere arbitrary will. An act of almighty power is necessary to make them free moral agents. Hence then follows the doctrine of Election, a doctrine as abhorrent to every sentiment of justice in the human bosom as the doctrine of Original Sin.

Another doctrine has sprung out of it quite as inconsistent with reason and justice, — the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. This doctrine teaches that baptism, administered by consecrated hands, is accompanied by an act of God's power, supernaturally exerted, to change the nature of the child to which it is administered, to restore the ruin of the Fall, and place the child in the condition in which Adam was before he sinned.

What valid objection can be made to this doctrine, if the principle involved in the doctrine of Original Sin be admitted? Is it said, that it is partial and unjust, on the part of God, to bestow this favor on one human being before he has arrived at an age of moral and responsible action, and withhold it from another no better and no worse? It may be answered, that it is quite as just as to suffer one being to ruin the nature and blast the prospects of another, without any community of action between the two. And if there be no moral or metaphysical objection to this use of almighty power in the case of a few, why, we solemnly ask, is it not extended to all? Do not the plainest dictates of justice demand that it should be extended to all? They were ruined by an agency over which they had no control; why should they not be restored by an agency equally foreign and independent of themselves?

The figure of regeneration, petrified into a dogma, *reverses the order of spiritual renovation* as laid down in the Scriptures. It is the uniform representation of the sacred writers, that *the first step towards salvation is taken by man* in the exercise of his free and

unbiased will; and so salvation is sincerely offered to all to whom the Gospel is preached. "*Whosoever will*, let him come and take the waters of life freely." But if the doctrine of Regeneration in the sense of a passive change of constitution be true, there is no sincerity in this invitation, or any other invitation recorded in the Bible. The will is *not* free in the direction indicated. It has *no* power in that direction, until subjected to an act of almighty transformation.

Those passages which seem to favor this system, when closely examined, are found to teach the very opposite; as, for instance, that remarkable one in the first chapter of the Gospel of John: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here it would seem, at first sight, that the spiritual birth took place by the immediate agency of God, without the co-operation of the human will, and almost in opposition to it. But if we go back to the preceding verse, we find that it is all explained. There we find that there is a free act of the human will, which *precedes* the adoption of the sons of God. "But as many *as received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The act of receiving Christ was man's act, done in the exercise of his free, unbiased will, and what God does is *consequent* upon it. And we learn to interpret the act of God's will by which Christians become the sons of God, not of his influencing the human will, but of his providing through faith in Christ another way for men to become his spiritual children, besides being descended by birth from the

stock of Abraham, or being adopted into the Israelitish nation by proselytism.

Regeneration preached as a doctrine *generally misrepresents the nature of spiritual influences*, that action of God upon the soul of man which is represented in the New Testament as accompanying the administration of Christianity. It is nowhere represented *as changing the essential elements of human nature*, as making men incapable of sin, or securing them against it, except by a continuance of their own exertions. Such a change would be inconsistent with the continuance of a state of probation. The Spirit is represented as *aiding* men, not as doing their work for them and superseding their own agency. "The Spirit *helpeth* our infirmities."

It is given, according to the representations of the word of God, *in answer to prayer*. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask him?*" If so indefinite and mysterious a subject is capable of definition, perhaps the nearest approach we can make to a logical definition of spiritual influences as applicable to Christian experience, is this. *It is the natural influence upon the soul of man which is exerted by true prayer to the true God.* It is the powerful and transforming force that is thus brought to operate upon the human soul. It is felt by every human being who intelligently and fervently prays to the Father of spirits. It is the grand instrument of the sanctification of the soul. But it produces no change in the essential nature of man. It does not make salvation sure, nor secure to any an immunity

from subsequent temptation, declension, and fall. Paul himself, with all the aid he received from the ordinary and supernatural influence of the Spirit of God, was conscious that he still was in danger of spiritual disaster, and, after having preached to others, himself might become a castaway.

It has been the pressing of the figure of regeneration to a positive doctrine, affecting the essential nature of man, which in different ages has produced the fatal Antinomian error of the Saint's Perseverance, a doctrine which has disturbed the peace of so many churches, and put a period to the growth of so many Christians. It is impossible to prevent the belief which a man cherishes in a supernatural change in his nature, wrought by God's immediate interposition, from begetting a false confidence in himself, and a spiritual arrogance towards others. There are no distinctions so sure to be the foundation of pride and assumption, as those which are attainable by no human effort. They are secured by a monopoly with which nothing can interfere.

And so we see, in Protestant churches, the same use made of the dogma of Regeneration, that is made of the doctrine of Infallibility by the Church of Rome. It is made the instrument of ecclesiastical domination. Those who profess to have been regenerated assume to themselves the whole management of ecclesiastical affairs by divine right. They make it the ground of disfranchising all who do not make the same pretension. Their religious experience they consider to amount to a divine sanction of their religious opinions, and upon the strength of this superior illumination they claim the power, not only to

judge of their own state, but of the religious condition and opinions of others. They undertake to decide who are and who are not prepared to approach the table of communion, and to shut out, on grounds of mere opinion, those who exhibit in their daily life quite as strong evidence of sincere allegiance to the Saviour as themselves.

Thus Protestant churches attempt to govern the world by *ideas*, precisely as the Catholic Church governed it by institutions; and the infallibility of having been born again is found quite as useful an instrument of spiritual domination, as the infallibility of belonging to the Holy Catholic Church, derived by unbroken succession from the Apostles.

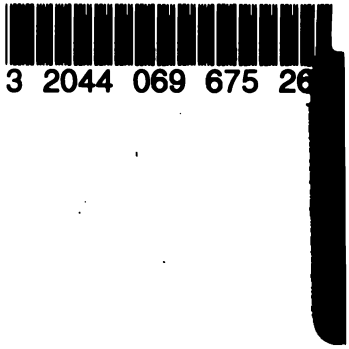
But the most pernicious consequence of preaching Regeneration as a doctrine is, that *it underrates the power of the human will* as an instrument of spiritual renovation. *Our characters are formed by what we do.* The best and most efficient means of religious improvement is *action.* Form a good purpose and execute it immediately, and it is a giant stride towards the excellence we seek. It is a good thing to pray, and systematically to use the means of grace, as they are called. But there is something better still. Do with zeal and energy the first duty which presents itself, overcome the first temptation which besets you, and the soul shall wax strong in virtue by the simple exercise of its own powers.

Hence the barrenness of worship, and the use of the instrumental duties of religion in Christian lands. The divine order of spiritual renovation is overlooked. *It begins with an act of the will*, and Christ's first message to the world was, "*Repent*,

for the kingdom of God is at hand." Men worship in vain, because they neglect the conditions of acceptable worship, which are to do your duty as far as you know it before you attempt to worship. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; *first be reconciled to thy brother*, and then come and offer thy gift." That act shall profit thee more than to listen for months to solemn liturgies and eloquent discourses, without the serious purpose or the earnest effort to do thy daily duty. Man's order is, Worship that you may be clean. The Divine order is, Be clean that you may worship. "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart!*"

This is a representation of things totally different from passive, constitutional regeneration, in which God must take the initiative step, and man must wait for a divine impulse. Every suggestion of duty, every admonition of conscience, is a divine impulse, not withheld from any individual of the human race. There is no such sharp dividing-line between the natural and the supernatural as narrow theologians represent. It is the same God who acts through both for the accomplishment of the same purpose. The highest species of self-culture is not spiritual exercises, but action, prompt, resolute, persevering action. It is not to go into God's temples and cry, Lord, Lord! but to do the things which he hath commanded.

THE END.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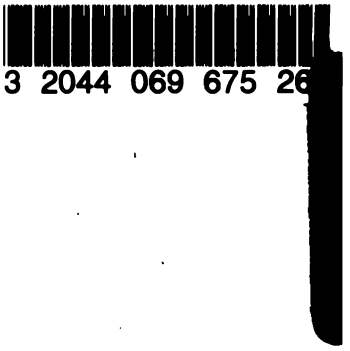
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